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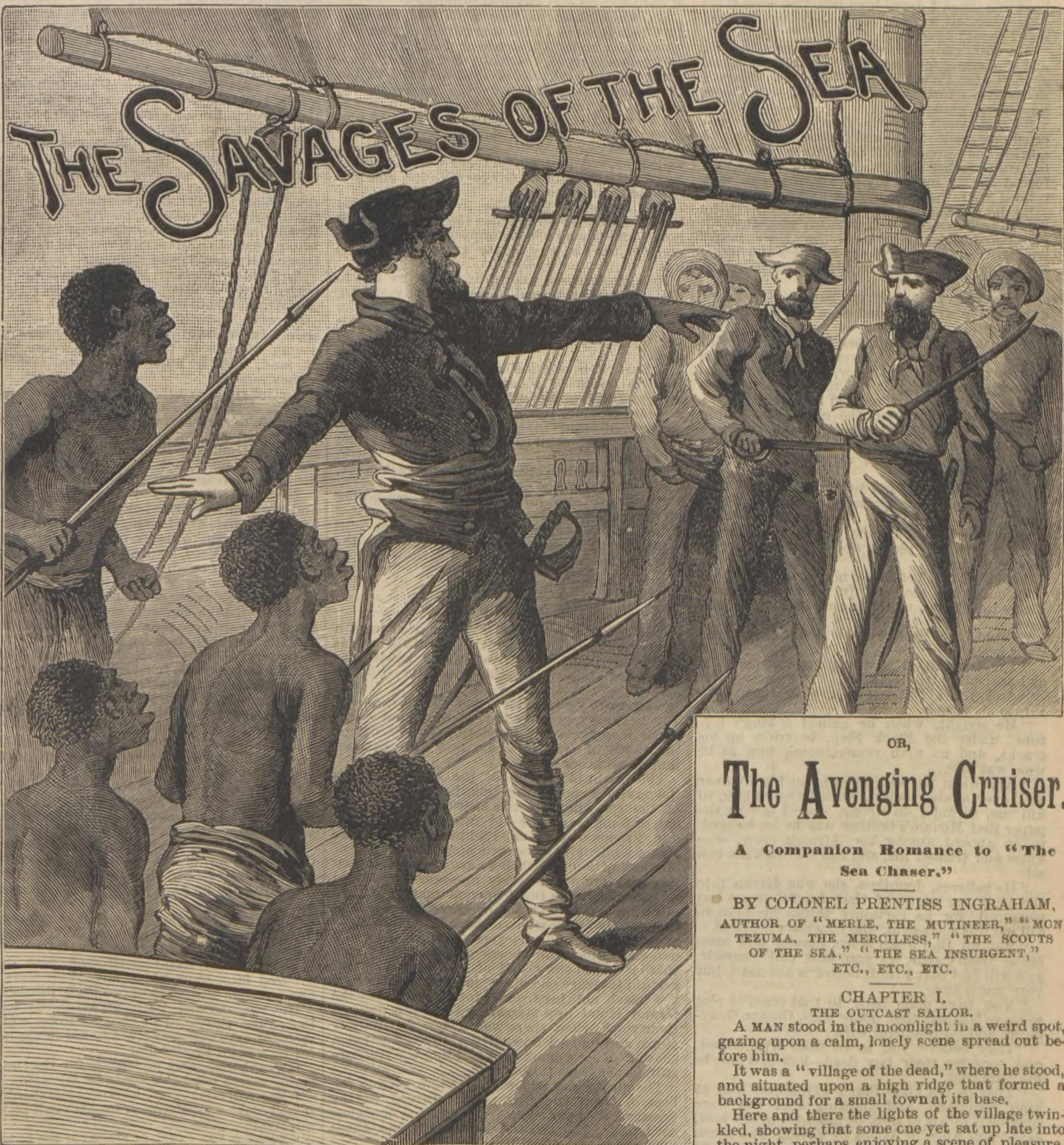
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AT A WORD FROM THE CHIEF THE BLACKS RUSHED UPON HIM WITH THEIR SPEARS. LIFTED
HIM IN MID AIR ON THEIR POINTS AND THREW HIM OVERBOARD INTO THE SEA.

OR, The Avenging Cruiser.

A Companion Romance to "The
Sea Chaser."

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MON.
TEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," "THE SCOUTS
OF THE SEA," "THE SEA INSURGENT,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE OUTCAST SAILOR.

A MAN stood in the moonlight in a weird spot,
gazing upon a calm, lonely scene spread out before him.

It was a "village of the dead," where he stood,
and situated upon a high ridge that formed a
background for a small town at its base.

Here and there the lights of the village twinkled,
showing that some one yet sat up late into
the night, perhaps enjoying a scene of pleasure,
and mayhap nursing by the bedside of dying
kindred.

The Savages of the Sea.

The town skirted the shores of a pretty bay, a harborage where numerous vessels lay at anchor, from the stately clipper ship to the humble fishing craft.

Lower down upon the ridge upon which stood the cemetery was a fine old mansion, lowering up grandly in the moonlight and surrounded by acres of ornamental grounds.

The man stood with uncovered head by the grave of those dear to him, for his parents lay buried there, and the moonlight revealed distinctly his face and form, and also that a monument had been placed over one who rested there.

His form was tall, elegant and clad in sailor uniform, but with no insignia of rank about him, though he certainly appeared to be an officer.

His face was very dark, his hair curling and touching his shoulders, and his features handsome, fearless and manly.

He held in his hand an officer's cap, with a gold anchor in front.

"Across the threshold of yonder grand house I can never cross," he mused aloud.

"And yet the time was, when my father who sleeps here at my feet, was the richest man in the town.

"But times changed, for false friends stole his fortune from him, and at his death my poor mother was left to my care, and we moved from our handsome mansion in the village to yonder little cot nestling away beneath the cliff," and his eyes rested upon a pretty cottage near the beach.

"I saved her life, and her brother's in yonder bay, and when I dared love her, the proud old judge, her father, bade me match her fortune, and I should have her.

"Heaven knows I made the attempt honestly, and if a strange destiny threw me into the hands of Pierre the Pirate, and as slaver and rover I matched her fortune, it is my own secret as to how it was gained.

"I meant not to be a free flag rover; but cruel fate made me so, and I came here to claim a bride and—great God! her father was dead, her wild brother who owed his life to me, had forced her to marry my enemy, the man who robbed my father, my mother and myself.

"I did not blame her, oh, no! for at heart she was as true as steel; but, with my mother dead, persecuted to death by her husband, was it any wonder that I was driven to madness and there, by my cottage home one night, forced him to fight a duel with me?

"I avenged that night my parents; ay, and I avenged the wrong he had done me by making her his wife.

"A cruel fate caused her brother, who witnessed the duel, to be arrested, tried for the murder of his brother-in-law, and sentenced to be hanged, and lucky it was that I saw it in the papers, and came and rescued him from jail.

"I placed upon myself the charge of killing Gregory Vance, and this night have returned him to his home, and his sister now knows that I did not seek to avenge myself on him, as it appeared.

"But her husband fell by my hand, and that bars me from her presence evermore, evermore.

"And yet her hand cared for my mother in her last days, and placed above her ashes this handsome tomb.

"And what is before me now?
"Yonder lies the beautiful vessel I took from Pierre the Pirate, with her crew of African savages.

"Could I not gain untold riches above her swift keel?

"The temptation is strong upon me, outcast as I am; but I will not yield.

"And yet I will not return to Pierre the Pirate his vessel.

"He sought, when he gained a king's fortune, under the Black Flag, to cover up his tracks, and no man remembering him as he was, was safe.

"And when he, who owed to me his life over and over again, sought, when I visited him, to kill me, so did I do wrong, when I saw by the paper that Miriam's brother was to be hanged, to go aboard among his African crew, who knew and trusted me, and run off with his vessel.

"He believes, doubtless, she was driven into the Gulf the night of that fearful storm and swamped, for he certainly thinks his plan to kill me was successful, and considers me dead.

"But, no, Don Juan Moro, planter and master of Moro Castle, as you now call yourself, you will find that Frank Bestor is not dead, but very much alive.

"You have gone back to that coast to plot revenge against that noble man, Gaston Grayhurst, and his beautiful wife.

"They believe you to be their true friend, and consider their boy dead—lost in a gale in his little boat.

"They do not know that I kidnapped him at your command, and knowing that you were making a pirate of him, or intended to kill him, saved him when in Africa by having him taken by the slave-traders, who would aid him to escape and return to his parents.

"Don Moro has some strange motive for plotting against the Grayhursts, and that motive I will find out."

"Ha! I have it!

"I will take the schooner and sail for the coast of Africa and get the boy.

"I cannot believe that harm has befallen him, and yet he should have escaped ere this.

"Perhaps the cruisers have watched so closely no slavers have been able to get into the river and up to the trading posts.

"Yes, I will do a good work—restore Gordon Grayhurst to his parents."

With this he turned, dropped on one knee by the side of the graves, and bent his head as though in prayer.

"Help me to keep to my resolve to do right," came from his lips, and rising, he walked rapidly down the roadway, hesitated at the massive gateway of the mansion spoken of, entered and soon after stood upon the piazza, sheltered by a cluster of vines, and gazing into a room elegantly furnished and brightly lighted, in which sat two persons.

One of them was a woman of exquisite beauty, robed in deep black, and with tears dimming the luster of her large, glorious eyes.

She sat upon the side of a center table shielding her face partly with a fan, and certainly she could not have been over twenty years of age, though a certain pensive sadness upon her features showed that she had known what it was to suffer.

The other occupant of the room was a young man of twenty five; but he had the appearance of having been very ill, for his face bore traces of both mental and physical suffering.

His was a handsome face in spite of the haggard look upon it, called there from having lain for months under a sentence of death for a deed he was innocent of, the death of his sister's husband, though a witness of it at the hand of the sailor who stood gazing into the open window, his presence unsuspected.

Two weeks before, the sailor had rescued him from the town jail, and sailed away with him in his schooner, until his confession, signed and sealed, proved that he, and not Carter Weston had taken the life of Gregory Vance, and in a fair duel as man to man.

An hour before the sailor, Frank Bestor, had landed Carter Weston upon the beach near his home, and when he had disappeared from sight, had wended his way to the graveyard on the hill.

Now, as he stood gazing in upon the two in the library, he turned suddenly away, daring no longer to trust himself, and walked rapidly down a cliff pathway to the beach near his old home, the cottage where his mother had died.

A boat offshore came to his call, and soon he was on board of a beautiful-armed schooner, upon the deck of which the moonlight revealed a weird-looking, picturesque crew of African savages, dressed in snow-white shirts, knee trowsers, and skull-caps, but with arms and knees bare.

Not a white man other than the outcast sailor, was visible upon the decks.

At a word from him the anchor was gotten up, the sails set and the beautiful craft glided out of the harbor, her presence under the cliff unknown to those on any other vessel in the port.

CHAPTER II.

DON MORO'S FRIENDSHIP.

Now only a remnant of what was once a lordly house, stands upon the beautiful shores of Bay St. Louis, whose waters mingle with the deep-green billows of the romantic Gulf of Mexico.

Four-score years make many changes, especially in this progressive land of ours, and where in the long ago a few plantation houses dotted the shores of Bay St. Louis, now can be seen innumerable country seats.

The quaint old village of the same name as the bay, is a connecting link between the past of the early days of this century and the present, and many of the old families of Spanish and French descent can still be found dwellers there, while it is whispered along the shores of Mississippi Sound that there are men and women too, who know that their ancestors were bold buccaneers, and a few "ancient mariners" still alive have seen the black flag float the seas, and mayhap had themselves a share in the booty.

Treasure untold, so legends say, has been hidden away along the shores of Mobile Bay, and there is an old story told of how pirates buried certain treasure one night in several places on the beach not far from Point Clear, where the Grand Hotel now stands, and had just finished their work when there was a terrific thunder storm and hurled down from Heaven came a shower of enormous rocks hiding the treasure still deeper beneath them.

The pirates fled, their superstition getting the best of them and they never returned for the treasure, so the story goes; but it was doubtless a meteoric shower, and had the law-breakers not been there, would have fallen.

Still the rocks are enormous, lie just on the

shore and are there to-day, a curiosity to all who know of their existence.

But in recalling the romantic legends of the Gulf shores I am wandering away from the reality of my story, so will return to the old ruin on the Bay St. Louis.

Time's changes have nearly cut away a cove there in front of the lordly mansion and which formed a secure harborage, and a forest has grown about the relic of the once grand homestead, as though to bide it and its memories from view, while the dwellers in villas near it know little if anything of its history.

There are, it is true, some old people, who speak of there having once dwelt there as a gentleman planter, one who in reality was a pirate chief.

It is to that home in the past, when it was the admiration of all the neighborhood, that I would take my reader.

It was known as "Castle Moro," and it had a history, for an old Spaniard who had built it, living there with his wife and a retinue of servants, had all been murdered one night, it was supposed by pirates, who landed on the coast to pillage the place.

Then it lay vacant for a long while, and an odd character, who lived in exile, and was known as Monsieur Belgarde, held it for some time, when he mysteriously departed, and a kinsman of Don Juan Moro, as he called himself, the old murdered Spaniard, took possession, fitted it up and made a grand abode of it.

This Don Juan Moro was none other than Pierre, the Pirate, who, as Monsieur Belgarde had gone there for a purpose yet to be revealed, and again as the pretended heir of the old Don bad again come there to plot mischief.

The mischief he had plotted as Monsieur Belgarde was to kidnap the young son of Gaston Grayhurst, a wealthy planter dwelling a few miles up the coast from Castle Moro.

The Castle had towers at either end, and was a vast building, with wings, courts, and piazzas that gave it the appearance of being far more extensive than it really was.

It was luxuriously furnished, and no one suspected Don Juan Moro, its dark-faced, bearded, handsome master of being what he really was.

If, as Monsieur Belgarde, he had struck a cruel blow at the Grayhursts in kidnapping their only son, he had, as Don Juan Moro, struck a crueler one through a young planter, whom he made his tool to force into a duel with Gaston Grayhurst, and kill him.

And yet not even his tool, Shannon Vere, suspected that Don Juan was at heart the bitter foe of the man whom he called his friend.

Shannon Vere, the young planter who had slain Gaston Grayhurst in a duel, had been lost a snug fortune by his parents, a house, plenty of land, half a hundred negroes, and some money.

He had run through with all in a short while, become the companion of a bad lot of men, and had sunk to such a low degree that all of his old friends had cut him dead.

Then he suddenly received an inheritance, it was said, bought back his home and negroes and fitted up his house in luxurious style.

The "inheritance" had been from the Don, and had been the price paid him for killing Gaston Grayhurst, and leaving his beautiful wife a widow; though, to the credit at least be it said, of Shannon Vere, he did not suspect that he was the tool of the Don in this cruel act.

With the lonely Widow Grayhurst, living at her elegant home of Belle Eden, her little daughter Estelle, her only comfort, and mourning for the supposed death of her son Gordon, and the untimely end of her husband by the treachery of Don Juan Moro, whom she regarded as her best friend, I will introduce my kind reader to the master of Castle Moro, as he sits alone in his library one night something over a year after the duel that cost Gaston Grayhurst his life.

In the cove in front of the mansion lay at anchor an armed schooner of beautiful design, and with a negro crew upon her decks.

The vessel was the exact counterpart of the one seen on the Massachusetts Coast, which Frank Bestor, the outcast sailor had boarded and put to sea in.

The moonlight revealed the graceful craft, the white sands of the beach and the ornamental grounds of Castle Moro, which arose grandly over all, with its dark background of magnolias and live-oak trees.

The Don, however, was not enjoying the moonlit scene, but seated within doors was seemingly lost in meditation.

He was a tall, well-formed man, with darkly bronzed face, snow-white teeth, hair worn long and features that were exceedingly handsome.

He was dressed with great neatness, and looked the Spaniard he claimed to be, while he spoke always with an accent to aid in the deceit, for he was an Englishman.

"Yes, I will delay no longer, for the time has come when I must ask her to be my wife.

"She will not refuse, I know; but should she, it will make no difference, for she shall be mine, anyhow."

"There is too much at stake for me to let her escape me."

"And oh! how sweet my revenge, when she shall be my wife."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

His laugh, discordant, vicious, triumphant, suddenly ceased, as a negro with scared face dashed into the room.

It was Sable, the confidential valet of the Don.

What the black said was spoken in a tone and manner of great alarm, and the face of Don Juan turned livid.

An hour after, the yacht in the cove sailed away, and upon her deck stood her master, driven to sea by the startling intelligence brought him by his faithful valet.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

A LARGE clipper ship was lying becalmed in the mid-Atlantic, while overhead the skies were black as ink, and a storm was threatening to soon lash the placid waters into fury.

Upon the quarter-deck of the vessel were gathered the passengers, watching the gathering storm with some apprehension, though they had perfect confidence in their captain and his gallant ship.

Among the passengers there was one who would attract attention anywhere.

It was a young girl, as shapely as Venus, as beautiful as Hebe.

Her eyes were large, languid and yet full of slumbering passion, while her every feature was cast in a perfect mold.

Among the others she seemed to be treated as a superior being.

The truth was she was an actress, on her way to play in London.

Scarcely nineteen, she was yet a perfect type of womanhood, and already her name was becoming famous.

She watched the storm with admiration rather than dread, and as it came nearer she descended to the cabin, and soon returned prepared to face the tempest and remain on deck.

At last the timid ones went below, but Belle Eden, the actress, remained on deck near the helmsmen.

A few moments of awful suspense, and the noble ship, stripped to meet the storm, to storm-sails only, was seized in the teeth of the tempest and hurled upon her beam-ends.

Clinging to the taffrail, the maiden saved herself from being hurled into the seething sea, along with a score of gallant tars.

Driven furiously along, the good ship was threatened with being engulfed, or being thrown entirely over, when the captain cried out:

"Axes, ho! Cut away the masts!"

The tall, tapering sticks, with their graceful rigging and sails, were cut away one by one, for she would not right herself until the last stick went over, and the vast bulk surged back to a level keel.

But the stately ship of half an hour before had become a wreck upon the sea, and the strain upon her had been so great that that the men were hastily ordered to the pumps.

Day and night she drifted, and working for their lives the diminished crew fought back the waters; but all in vain, for the leak gained steadily upon them, and at last the order was given to get the boats ready to desert the ship.

Four large boats were prepared, with oars, sails and awning, and well provisioned, and one night pushed off from the sinking ship.

Nor were they any too soon, as ere they were out of sight the majestic ship, with a mighty plunge, went beneath the waves.

In one of the boats, with several other passengers, was Belle Eden, the actress, and the ship's captain commanded, with a crew of half a dozen seamen.

But a squall came up, the boats became separated, and when the next day a vessel was sighted, the other boats were nowhere in sight.

The sail proved to be a schooner, trimly built, a good sailor, and heavily armed.

Her keen lookout had sighted the boat, and she stood toward it.

That the schooner was other than she seemed, a vessel-of-war flying the American flag, no one would have believed.

Her crew were of a variety of nationalities, it was true, but they were neatly attired, and her officers were in uniform.

"It is one of those plucky Yankee craft, Miss Eden, that go to all parts of the world," said the clipper's captain, who was an Englishman.

Soon the schooner lay to, and the boat was alongside.

A young and handsome officer seized Belle Eden at the gangway, for she was the first to leave the boat.

He had already viewed her critically through his glass.

"Captain Peters, lady, and very much at your service, as also happy to have served you," he said, with a low bow.

"The service you render us is to save our lives, sir, and we are more than grateful."

"I am Miss Belle Eden," was the reply, in a voice and manner that showed perfect confidence in herself.

The others were also welcomed, and the old captain wrung the hand of the schooner's handsome young commander, and with tears in his eyes said:

"Sir, I owe you much, for you have saved us from death."

"My name is Thompson, Joe Thompson, skipper of the clipper ship Janie T—, and I lost the gallant craft three nights ago in the fiercest storm I ever encountered."

There are three other boats out, sir, and, as a humane man, I need not ask you to search for them, and put me on duty, please, as a lookout, Captain Peters."

The cabin of the schooner was at once prepared for the lady passengers, and the schooner began her search for the other boats.

But the search was fruitless.

If there were certain things about the schooner, her commander and crew that seemed mysterious, Captain Joe Thompson explained it as being natural on board a vessel that had been fighting and capturing Algerine and Moorish corsairs, and being subject to no immediate orders, her captain was like a king on board.

From the moment that Belle Eden put her little foot on his deck, Captain Peters loved her.

He was bound home, he said, but learning that she was going to England to play, he put away for that land simply to please her.

Ere he had reached the shores of England, he had told his love and begged her to give up the stage and become his wife.

But, with all his kindness, his courtly manners, and devotion, he had not touched the heart of Belle Eden.

Though full of gratitude to her preserver, Belle Eden refused his love, and thereby made him her bitter foe.

But he landed her and the others safely in England, and thus they parted.

When they again met it was on the shores of the Mexican Gulf, and years after their meeting at sea.

She had become the wife of Gaston Grayhurst, and "Captain Peters" was none other than Pierre, the Pirate, Monsieur Belgarde, and Don Juan Moro.

In the years that had passed the one-time actress did not recognize in the dark-faced, bearded master of Castle Moro, he whom she had known as Captain Peters.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WIDOW.

BELLE EDEN PLANTATION was named after its fair mistress, Gaston Grayhurst paying this compliment to his American wife.

Born of a noble family in England, and a younger son, Gaston Grayhurst was intended for the church, but seeing Belle Eden upon the stage it was a case of love at first sight, he made her acquaintance, and winning her affection in return the two were married.

The stern noble, his father, and his elder brother, cast him off for giving up the church and making an actress his wife; but from an uncle he had inherited a large fortune, and seeking America, he had made a home for himself and bride upon the beautiful shores of the Bay St. Louis.

Though his father and elder brother were both dead, Gaston Grayhurst clung to his new home and left the estates and old manor of his family in the care of his agent.

The title he of course possessed, though he did not make it known among his American friends.

"Some day, Belle," he was wont to say to his wife. "When our boy grows up we will go to England, and if he wishes the title he can have it, with all that goes with it."

"If I should die, and Gordon too, then the estates go to my younger brother, poor Piermont, if he is alive, as I fear he is not, for he ran away to sea when a mere lad, to escape the consequences of a scrape at college that was not as serious as he supposed."

"And you believe he yet lives?" Mrs. Grayhurst had said.

"Yes, and I so hope."

A woman of beauty and possessed of dramatic talent, with a superb voice, Mrs. Grayhurst, as Belle Eden, had had many admirers and lovers.

But not one had left the impression upon her that Captain Peters had.

Perhaps it was because he had saved her life; but at any rate she often spoke of him to her husband, and long after she was married hoped that he would some day again cross her path and see how happy she was.

When their son Gordon, a mere lad, setting sail in his little skiff one afternoon, and being caught out in a storm, was believed to have been drowned, the parents spoke no more of the English title and estates.

His upturned skiff on the beach, the cap he wore had been found, and though believed to be at the bottom of the sea, his mother erected in a little burying-ground a tomb to his memory.

Then from her was taken her noble husband, the man she idolized above all in the world, and to her, little Estelle, a beautiful child, was left.

And upon the arm of the man she had deemed her husband's friend, and her own, the man whom little Estelle had learned to call uncle, the beautiful widow leaned for support and looked

to for comfort by the grave of the man whom Don Moro's act had taken from life.

Sadly, wearily the days had dragged along for the poor woman, until long months had passed since the fatal duel.

She drove with Estelle in their carriage along the beach, or they rode on horseback over the plantation; but the lovely widow went nowhere, and returned no calls, though ever glad to see her friends.

If she needed advice about the government of the estate, she sought it from Don Juan Moro.

And he, each Sunday, was wont to go over to Belle Eden to dine, though ever ready to obey the call of its fair mistress if she needed his advice.

Once only had Mrs. Grayhurst seen Shannon Vere since his duel with her husband.

She had been riding over the plantation on horseback, accompanied by Estelle and a negro groom.

She had turned out of the fields into the highway, and was going along toward the beach, intending to ride along the sands back to the mansion.

Suddenly, in a bend of the forest road, she came upon a horseman.

He was well mounted, sat his saddle like one who had been reared in it, wore a sportsman's suit and carried a rifle across one arm.

At the heels of his horse trotted a dozen hounds.

The face of the man was a striking one, handsome, yet marred by a life of dissipation it seemed.

He was a young man, and yet the stamp of ten years beyond his age was upon him.

It was a sad face, one that seemed haunted by cruel memories, and withal he appeared the courtly gentleman.

At sight of the widow he halted his horse involuntarily, his face blanched, and he drooped his eyes.

Then off came his hat, his head was bowed and like one humbled, hurt, wounded to the heart and showing a marked respect, he waited until Belle Grayhurst passed him by.

Her face, too, had become white and hard when she beheld him.

It was not to be wondered at.

She was face to face with the man who had slain her husband.

To have saved her life Belle Grayhurst could not have kept her eyes off of his face.

She saw his attitude, of almost reverence, his pallor, his pain, and she rode by, catching his eyes once as he furtively raised them as she passed.

Then he rode on still with uncovered head, and Estelle said:

"Oh mamma! how sad that gentleman looked."

"Do we not know him?"

"Yes, Estelle, we do know him and he has reason to cower before us, for that is Shannon Vere, my child, the man who killed your father."

Estelle gave a slight cry, but it was as much at the look upon her mother's face, and the harsh tones of her ever-sweet voice, as at the knowledge that her father's slayer had just passed them by.

When the cool breezes from the Gulf fanned her cheek, Mrs. Grayhurst moved forward at a gallop, along the sands, and upon arriving at the mansion, every trace of her recent emotion had vanished from her face.

CHAPTER V.

THE DON'S LETTER.

SHANNON HALL was the name of the mansion and plantation left to the young man who had killed Gaston Grayhurst in a duel.

His mother had been a Shannon, and it was her home.

His father had been a naval officer, so had little, but married his fortune, a common thing in the navy.

After having mortgaged negroes, home and all, for Shannon Vere to suddenly receive wealth was a surprise, equaled only by the amazement that people felt to see that he did not immediately squander his second fortune.

But instead, he cut his wicked companions, and paying off all debts, started life anew in his home, which he had fitted up with almost luxurious elegance.

His killing Planter Grayhurst just in the starting out upon his career of reformation, added to the cloud upon him, for Gaston Grayhurst was a very popular man with all.

But the duel had been a fair one, the challenge coming from Shannon Vere, for a direct insult given, and Don Juan Moro had served, at the request of each gentleman, as the only second, and Doctor Dillon Spotswood, who acted as surgeon, had said Vere had behaved well, only being quicker in his fire than Grayhurst had been.

As he kept to himself those who meant to snub him still more did not get the opportunity.

If he met any of those who had once been his intimates, and had dropped him, he seemed not to notice their existence, though many, when they found he had a fortune once more, would have been glad to recognize him, so potent is the power of money.

The Savages of the Sea.

That he had received a legacy of a large sum all believed; but that it had come from Don Juan Moro not a soul suspected, for why should the Don give the worthless vagabond, as Vere had become, a fortune?

Not knowing the Don's plots, no one had an idea that there was underhand work going on.

After the duel Shannon Vere regularly visited the Don, for to Castle Moro was the only place he went, and there was a strange friendship existing between the two.

The young planter was therefore much surprised one morning, as he sat at breakfast, to receive a letter from Don Moro stating that he had sailed in his yacht during the night for an indefinite period.

There were two old servants, Buck and his wife Phoebe, who had never been mortgaged by Shannon Vere, and they had been true as steel to him in all the misfortunes his wicked life had brought upon him.

They had been made happy by the change for the better in his life and fortunes, and Buck had resumed the dignified position of butler, while Phoebe had become housekeeper, and excellent servants they were.

"A letter for you, sah, from Castle Moro," said Buck, as he brought a letter in just handed him by a servant from the Castle Moro Plantation.

Shannon Vere had just swallowed his last drop of coffee, and taking the letter he arose and sought his library.

In his dressing-gown and slippers he looked much older than he was.

There were sins upon his soul that stamped the face with their indelible footprints.

Breaking the seal he read:

"CASTLE MORO,
"Friday."

"MY DEAR VERE:—

"This day, Friday, always was unlucky to me, as I recall the many unfortunate events of my life which have occurred on Friday.

"I received to-night, per special messenger, news that forces me to sail at once for Mexico, and perhaps thence to Spain, so my stay will be for an indefinite time, as you can see.

"I had no time to communicate with you, as I would like to have done, so write, begging you to watch certain events for me, and if necessary, put a spy on certain people if you have to send to New Orleans for the man.

"I would wish to know just what effect my going has upon the widow at Belle Eden.

"I also would wish to know if there is any gossip regarding me circulating about the neighborhood, and in truth all that is said of my sudden departure, for, Castle Moro and its former occupants having been a place and people of mystery, naturally I am looked upon in the same light, and my actions may be misunderstood.

"I leave you to have an eye to Castle Moro, the plantation and slaves, so try to make it your business to ride over daily and see if all goes well there.

"Let it be noise about that I have been called to Spain to see an invalid relative whose heir I am.

"Now remember, because you are not under my eye, you are not to yield to the temptations that beset you.

"If you break through your pledge to me, I will grow revengeful with all that that implies and you will understand what that means.

"Write me as per within slip of paper and let me know exactly the effect of my departure and what is said about it.

"If anything new transpires in the neighborhood post me fully.

"Your friend,
DON."

"P. S. I shall write you through my attorney in New Orleans."

This strange letter Shannon Vere read and reread.

Then he said aloud:

"I wonder what it means."

A moment after Buck came in for some purpose and his master remarked:

"Buck, the Don has gone away for quite a while I fear."

"No, sah; his yacht at anchor in front of de Belle Eden Plantashun, massa."

"No!"

"Yas sah, I jist seen it dere from de upper windows."

Shannon Vere went up into the cupola of his mansion, and taking a large spy-glass from a bracket turned it upon a vessel that lay at anchor in front of the Belle Eden home.

"No, that is not the Shark, for this craft looks weather-stained in hull and sails—but, by Heaven it is the sister craft of the Shark, the Sea Shell, which was driven out the cove that night of storm with her African crew on board, and whom all supposed to have been lost."

"Yes, it is the Sea Shell, and I wonder if her return last night, for she was not there yesterday, had anything to do with the Don's sudden departure?"

"I must find out," and he descended from the cupola, evidently mystified.

CHAPTER VI.

FRANK BESTOR'S PLOT.

SEVERAL years prior to the scene in the opening chapter of this story, a schooner lay at anchor in an African river.

She was armed, and floated a flag; but it was not a flag known to any nation for it was of

blank field and with red crossed cutlasses in the center.

Besides her rather wild-looking crew there were three persons on the quarter-decks dressed in uniform.

In one these could be recognized her commander, known to the reader as Don Juan Moro, and in another the face of Frank Bestor his lieutenant was recognizable.

The third was a mere lad hardly more than in his teens.

His face was as handsome as a picture, fearless and resolute, and his form well developed and tall for his years.

He was clad in a neat uniform, wore his cap jauntily, and was a junior lieutenant of the vessel.

The mission of the schooner to that dreary river on the African coast could be but for one purpose, and that was to get a cargo of slaves.

To end up his career of piracy, of late not so very successful, Don Juan Moro, or Pierre the Pirate as he was then called, had determined to make a slaver of his vessel, well knowing how lucrative such a cargo landed on the coast of Cuba would prove.

"I will go ashore and arrange with the trader to go to the corral after the first lot of slaves, sir," said Frank Bestor, and soon after he was landed and making his way to the quarters of the trader.

That unworthy personage, who looked upon Africans as cattle, was seated in his comfortable quarters on a hill, enjoying his pipe and a little brandy and water.

"Ah, Mr. Lieutenant, I am glad to see you.

"Come to arrange about the first lot, I suppose?"

"Yes, Carmal, and about another matter also."

"All right, senor, let me know your wishes?"

"These slaves are back in the country?"

"Yes, senor, in a corral village, and being prepared for the sea voyage."

"How far away?"

"To the first corral, ten leagues, for you see we dare not keep them here as the cruisers come in and liberate them."

"Then there is another corral village five leagues further in the interior, and as the first move out the latter take their place, and so on for a dozen corral villages."

"I have a fine lot for the captain, senor, and three corrals will fill his schooner."

"You send a guard with me after them?"

"Ah, yes, senor."

"Can you be trusted, Carmal?"

"Oh, senor, with your life."

"You are here to make money?"

"Only for that reason, senor."

"I suppose, for a good little sum you would be willing to do as I ask?"

"With pleasure."

"There is a lad on our vessel?"

"Yes, a handsome boy, and a lieutenant I believe?"

"Yes."

"The captain's son, eh?"

"No, but one he calls his protege, though Heaven help him."

"The truth is, Carmal, I like the boy, and the captain hates him from some old feeling of revenge against his parents."

"He is therefore determined to bring him up as a pirate, and I wish to save him from such a fate."

"You are right, senor! but how is it to be done?" asked the trader.

"That I wish to arrange with you."

"How can I serve you?"

"I am to go with your guard after these slaves, to the first corral."

"Yes."

"The lad is to accompany me."

"I see."

"Sometimes there are blacks who attack slaves en route, and capture them to sell to other traders."

"Yes, and they are called Man-Hunters."

"Now, could you not arrange that some of your guards, with a slight disguise, could play Man-Hunters?"

"I do not exactly understand?"

"Your guards that accompany me must be in the secret, and therefore fire their weapons loaded without ball, do you see."

"Those whom you select to play Man-Hunters must go also without loaded weapons."

"At a certain point they are to attack, and some of the guards are to fall as though dead, the lad can do the same, I can retreat on to the corral with the others, and when I return to the ship, with the slaves, I can report the death of the lad to the captain."

"I see; but the lad?"

"You must have a man you can trust to carry the lad to one of your interior corrals, and I will see to it that a grave is made to help along our plot."

"You are a good schemer, senor."

"Will you do as I ask?"

"For gold."

"Of course, I never suspected you of serving me for nothing."

"What does the senor wish to pay?"

"The price of five slaves in gold."

"Enough, senor, I will arrange all."

"Very well, I will leave it to you, and we start for the slave corral to-morrow."

"Yes."

"And you are to send the lad back to a corral, one some distance in the interior, until the schooner is freighted and sails."

"Yes, senor."

"He will have money to pay his way, and I will now give you your price."

The gold was counted out, the price of five slaves, and Frank Bestor returned to the schooner, feeling that he had at least done a good deed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ATTACK.

GORDON GRAYHURST was pacing the deck of the buccaneer schooner of Pierre the Pirate, and which had been metamorphosed into a slaver, when Frank Bestor returned on board and slipped into his hand a paper.

The lad walked forward, leant over the bulkhead, and read what was written there:

It was as follows:

"You are to go with me to the corral of the slaves."

"Carry with you all your money, and go prepared to remain away."

"You understand what I mean, after what we have talked over."

BESTOR."

The lad's eyes flashed as he read this, and his face flushed with pleasure.

Back went his memory over the past.

He recalled how he had saved the life of the supposed old man, known as Monsieur Belgarde, and the friendship that had sprung between them, when, to all, the mysterious master of Castle Moro kept himself a stranger.

Then came the remembrance of how he had gone in his skiff one afternoon to visit Monsieur Belgarde, and had seen what he supposed was an American schooner-of-war run into the Bay and anchor off Belle Eden.

To the commander of the vessel Monsieur Belgarde had bid him bear a letter, and glad he was to do so, that he might get a view of the gallant vessel from her decks.

A storm had come up while he was on board, and forced to remain all night, he had awakened to find that Monsieur Belgarde was Pierre the Pirate, and he had been kidnapped, through the letter to Frank Bestor, the lieutenant of the buccaneer schooner.

He recalled how he had been made an officer by Pierre the Pirate, forced to serve as such, and but for the kind lieutenant, Bestor, who talked to him continually of his home and those dear to him, the scenes of his earlier years would have faded from memory, amid the thrilling adventures and rovings he had gone through.

Young as he had been when kidnapped, with strange scenes, sea fights, and duties devolving upon him beyond his years, it would have been no wonder had the lad forgotten.

But against this Frank Bestor had cleverly plotted by continuously getting the boy to talk of his home.

This, however, Captain Pierre, cunning as he was, never suspected.

Gordon Grayhurst knew that at home he was regarded as dead, supposed to have been lost in the storm that swept the coast and Gulf the night he was kidnapped.

Captain Pierre had told him his skiff had been sent ashore bottom up, his cap thrown upon the beach and all done to imply that he had been lost in the storm.

He knew that hearts sorrowed for him at home, and Frank Bestor had hinted, in spite of Pierre's watch over him, he would some day find a way for him to escape from his forced service as an outlaw officer.

The time had at length come.

What the plan of the buccaneer lieutenant was, he could not imagine; but he did as he was directed, buckled around his waist his buckskin belt containing his share of booty, which Pierre had turned over to him, in the way of gems and jewelry which had been taken from the neck, ears and fingers of women captured at sea.

The next day Frank Bestor and the lad lieutenant, as the pirate crew called him, went ashore to start to the corral after the first relay of slaves.

As the youth had not been allowed to go ashore since he was kidnapped, Captain Pierre had said that the run to the corral would do him good and that there was a possibility of his escape he did not believe.

In truth, Captain Pierre had begun to feel that the lad liked his new life and was fast forgetting those dear to him in America.

"It will not take him much longer to look upon his boyhood at home as a dream, and though I give up piracy and settle down to live a life of luxury and plot further against Gaston Grayhurst and his fair wife, their boy must keep up his piracies."

"I'll see to that, and one day it will be joy for me to tell Belle Eden that her son is a pirate."

"Then, when her ears have drunk in this bit of news, I must see to it that the boy dies on a pirate deck, for if he lives he is in my way."

"Ah! but it's a clever plot I have."

And it was, without doubt, a plot which the reader will discover in all of its diabolical features.

So, fearing nothing, Captain Pierre allowed the youth to go ashore, and they started, he and Frank Bestor, with a guard for the slave corral.

Carmal, the trader, true to his interest rather than his word, had cleverly planned all as he agreed to do.

A number of his trusted slaves had been rigged out as the Man-Hunters were wont to appear when on the trail, and these were stationed at a certain point to make a bogus attack.

As they went along Frank Bestor said:

"Gordon, I have told you enough of my life to have you know I did not intentionally become a pirate."

"Yes."

"Cruel fate separated me from one I loved, and there were conditions put upon me to win her that would have driven many men at once to piracy."

"Perhaps that was what her father wished to have me do, when he bade me match his daughter's fortune with one of my own."

"Chance threw me into the hands of Pierre, the Pirate, and destiny led me on to be what I now am."

"Feeling for you, and intending myself to return and lead an honest life, claiming my bride, for I can match her fortune, though the money was obtained by piracy, I wish to restore you to your home and friends."

"So it was I arranged for a bogus attack upon us, you are to fall at the fire, I am to retreat with the guards to the corral, and upon my return am to report to Pierre that I saw you fall, and upon my return, buried you."

"He will suspect nothing, and when the schooner sails, Carmal, the trader, will send for you, for a man who falls with you will guide you to a corral in the interior."

"Then, living with Carmal, you can catch some vessel coming into the river and thus make your way home."

"When you do get there, bid your parents beware of Pierre, the Pirate, who, in some disguise, is likely to hover near them until he can do them some great wrong, but what I know not."

"You have your money and jewels?"

"Yes, in my belt."

"Well, grasp my hand in farewell, for we are liable to be attacked at any moment."

As the boy lieutenant grasped the hand of the buccaneer officer, there came a volley of rifles, and out of the forest upon them and their black guards dashed the African Man-Hunters, with wildest yells.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CAPTURE OF SAVAGES.

With the first volley of the guns, and the appearance of the supposed Man-Hunters, the lad dropped to the ground.

He saw Frank Bestor wave his hand to him, in farewell, and then, gathering his guards about him retreat, also firing, and soon he disappeared.

The Man-Hunters followed, and they too soon disappeared.

The ruse was a perfect one and deceived the slaves not in the secret.

Then a man who had fallen near to the lad, rose.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered African, naked to the waist, and with great muscular arms and legs.

About his neck was a string of bones, gay feathers adorned his head, and the lad knew him as Carmal the trader's favorite slave.

He spoke English fairly well, and said:

"Young white chief come—Koobah take nice place."

Gordon Grayhurst arose, glanced about him, and seeing neither guards or Man-Hunters in view asked:

"Are you Koobah?"

"Me is," was the laconic response.

"Very well, I will go with you."

"Good!" and the savage seemed delighted.

He beckoned to Gordon to follow, and picking up an enormous pack which one of the guards had purposely dropped, he slung it upon his back with perfect ease and strode away.

For a mile or more he walked merrily along and then came to a halt.

Opening his bundle he took out a pair of skin boots which he gave to the lad to put on, and the tops of which came far above his knees.

Then he gave him some roughly-made clothing, to replace his uniform, and a cool hat made of grasses and feathers, which was a relief in place of his naval cap.

There was food in the bundle also, and both

ate heartily, after which, packing up the traps of the lad, Koobah threw the pack over his shoulder and started off through the forest.

For hours he tramped along, and fortunately for Gordon his continued exercise on foot on board ship helped him, and he was able to follow.

At night they halted and the African undid his pack and took out their supper and along with it two bark hammocks, with hooks on either end made from the crotch of a limb.

Then he climbed up into a tree and made fast, near together, and said, when he came down:

"Much good sleep up tree.
No eat up in tree by wild beasts.
Sleep here, get eat up."

The tree was of course, under such circumstances, the choice of the lad, and as it was growing dark he went up the tree to his roost in the hammock.

Koobah followed, and drew up with a rope the pack.

Soon after both were fast asleep and at the foot of the tree a pack of wild beasts howled a serenade, which awoke the lad and convinced him that Koobah knew just what he was about when he chose elevated quarters for the night.

The next day was a long and dreary one, for Koobah kept on the tramp continuously.

The lad studied the face of the African and was sure that he saw there an anxious expression, and he could not understand why they pushed on so rapidly, as there was certainly no fear of pursuit.

Frank Bestor had given him to understand that the trader was to send him, under a trusted slave, to an interior corral, to there await the sailing of the schooner from the river.

But he wondered that he should go a day and a half's journey, especially as he was supposed to be dead by the buccaneer chief.

The African again followed the same tactics at night, having supper and swinging their hammocks in a tree.

Gordon Grayhurst saw that he was prepared, according to what was in his pack, for a longer journey, so he asked:

"How much further is it, Koobah, to where we go?"

"Much far; take little white chief to Koobah's home."

This was about all that the lad could ascertain, so he philosophically decided to take matters as they came.

The nature of the country changed as they advanced.

The forests seemed more dense, there were streams, valleys, mountains, and magnificent scenery.

The lad was charmed with the adventure of the trip and the beauties of nature, though he was a trifle anxious as to the result.

Koobah still seemed to feel that anxiety he had shown from the first.

It was not on account of the trackless forest, for he never hesitated as to what course to pursue.

It was not from dread of wild beasts, for he appeared to be indifferent to their presence.

They shot game and lived well, and there were wild fruits which Koobah knew well, so that, excepting for the endless tramp, Gordon Grayhurst did not suffer.

At length the black halted one morning and pointed to a distant range of mountains.

It was their ninth day on the tramp.

"There, that Koobah home."

"People there, and Koobah big chief of tribe."

"Little white chief Koobah's brother."

Gordon did not pretend to dispute the relationship.

Koobah was all he had to depend upon, and he was too glad to know that rest was at hand.

So they tramped on through the day, and swimming across a river, pushing a small raft, Koobah had made, before them, with their pack upon it, they reached the mountains.

They had already been discerned by black sentinels, and a party of men, armed with spears and other weapons, and looking as ferocious as cannibals, approached them.

The river was broad at this point, and made a bend around the mountains base, forming a vast horseshoe; and up in the hills, thus protected, was a powerful tribe of blacks known as the Baka-Kogahs, which, being interpreted, means Mountain Lions.

Their safe retreat had kept them from attack by other tribes, and they were wont to eke out a very fair living by making raids upon other black villages.

A powerfully-built people, with wonderful endurance, they were as fierce as the lions they took their name from, and were noted as cunning warriors and a fearless tribe, whom all stood in dread of.

As Koobah and the lad drew near, the former suddenly raised his hands over his head and made a peculiar sign, after which he gave a long, loud and remarkable cry.

Instantly the party of blacks dashed forward and threw themselves on their faces before Koobah.

But the lad knew now that his guide had deserted the trader to return to his own people, and that he was the captive of savages.

CHAPTER IX.

KING KOOBAH.

The Baka-Kogahs who prostrated themselves before Koobah, remained upon their faces until the latter had said a few words to them in their native tongue.

Then they arose and began to dance about him in a circle, the while shouting forth a welcome song.

Gordon was duly impressed with the proceedings, for he was not sure how all would turn out for him.

At last four of the savages turned and darted away up the mountain path, blowing as they ran wild, discordant notes upon a peculiar shell which each one had strung about his neck.

The others formed a circle about Koobah and the lad, and all moved off at a slow pace up the steep mountain path.

They had not gone more than a mile when Gordon believed that pandemonium had broken loose up in the mountains.

He looked toward Koobah, and that worthy said:

"My people glad to see Koobah. Been way long time."

"Koobah king now, for father dead."

The lad seemed to be reassured to know that he was the brother of a king, though his royal savagery was blacker than the ace of spades.

The sounds that came to their ear from up in the mountains was as though a menagerie of wild beasts were on the rampage.

There were yells in hundreds of voices, shells blown with a vigor that threatened to burst them, the beating of African drums, and any quantity of outside racket enough to make one deaf for life.

At length the party reached the plateau and the village was before them.

It was a large village, situated in a valley through which ran a stream of purest water.

Hundreds of thatched huts were scattered over the valley, there were tamed buffalo and other animals roaming about the valley, and lying around the village, like huge domestic dogs, were visible many lions, fierce looking, but raised from cubs until they were not particularly dangerous.

Women and children, clad in feather costumes, and wearing ornaments in their nose and ears, stood massed at one end of the village, while hundreds of warriors, black as ink, and with long spears and clubs were ranged in two rows to welcome the advancing party.

The moment that Koobah appeared there was a wild shout of welcome, and then the blowing of shells and beating of native drums.

Then there came a dead silence and every warrior, woman and child prostrated themselves before their king.

The party of warriors with Koobah and the lad fell back behind them, and the returned savage marched on, with Gordon by his side, to the king's hut, a large thatched structure over which floated a flag of gay feathers in the center of which was a red lion.

Reaching the large hut Koobah turned and dismissed his attendants with a few words, and they fell upon their faces for an instant and rising dashed away toward the village, where preparations were going on for a grand feast.

The lad saw the children gathering brush and wood and piling it up on the hillsides at regular intervals, and the women were preparing food for the feast, while the men were busy slaughtering various animals to be eaten.

The king's hut was as I have said, large and comfortable.

In the center was a vast room evidently a council-chamber, and around it were the quarters of the savage ruler.

The furniture was limited in the extreme, consisting of a few mats on cane cots and some wooden and stone dishes.

Then there were various weapons hanging on the walls, and trophies of war and the hunt.

Koobah seemed to be very much elated over his reception, and he kept his eye upon the lad to see if he had not been duly impressed with his importance.

Then squatting down upon a seat, and motioning to Gordon Grayhurst to do the same, he told him the story of his life.

In his terse way he told how his ancestors had been Kings of the Baka-Kogahs for generations, and he had been captured three years before, while making war on a neighboring tribe.

They would have put him to death, but a party of Man-Hunters had visited the tribe and offered a large price for him, so he had been sold to them and was carried to the coast, where, knowing he was the son of an African king the trader had made him his overseer of the slaves.

He had sent word to his father that he lived, and would some day come home; but he had been unable to escape until he had been given charge of the youth to conduct to one of interior corrals of the trader.

Then Koobah had decided to make his escape, and he gathered together his savings for years, put them in a pack, and arranged his plans so well that he had managed at last to reach his people.

The Savages of the Sea.

A year before his father had died; but the chiefs had ruled the tribe until it was known whether he was really dead or alive.

Then, to the joy of all he had come, and at once had been welcomed as King Koobah.

"And little white chief is King Koobah's brother," again asserted the black ruler.

Gordon felt more flattered now at the distinction than he had when told the same thing on the tramp to the retreat of the Mountain Lions.

Then he had suspected Koobah of being a mere nobody; but when he knew him as King of the Mountain Lions, he felt the honor conferred upon him in being adopted as a brother.

As he could not speak a word of the African lingo, and was wholly dependent upon Koobah, he determined to cling to him closer than a brother, and he did so.

That night, when darkness came on, the fires were lighted on the hillsides all around the village, and the feast was ready.

Koobah had rigged himself out in a skirt of red feathers, and a head-dress that contained a feather from every specimen bird in Africa.

His arms and legs were encircled by bands of gold and silver metal, beaten into shape, and about his neck were strings of claws from lions and tigers.

Then there was a necklace of finger-bones taken from foes he had slain, and a live snake was coiled about his waist to serve as a sash, Gordon supposed.

In honor of the occasion, Gordon had gotten out his uniform and put it on, sword and all, and at this Koobah seemed pleased, for all the tribe were dressed in their best to attend the feast of welcome.

At last the king and his young white brother left the thatched royal home, and wended their way to the scene of festivities.

Every one went down on their faces at their approach, but a word from Koobah brought them to their feet, and then, amid a deathlike silence, he told them of his adventures, of his having been a slave, of the white-winged ships of a white race, and how at last he had escaped.

Having been associated with the whites he had learned to lie, and, though Gordon did not know it, he told his people that he owed his escape to his white brother.

Down went all on their faces before Gordon, greatly to his surprise and confusion: but it showed him that he was to be treated with respect.

Then the black warriors passed along in a line, each touching the breast of their king with one hand, and their forehead with the other, and coming to Gordon Grayhurst they showed him the same mark of respect, after which all set to, to enjoy the feast, and that night the lad slept in a village of savages, the adopted brother of an African king.

CHAPTER X.

THE OUTCAST SAILOR'S MISSION.

IT will be remembered that Frank Bestor, the outcast sailor, set sail from the seaport, where he had saved Carter Weston from the gallows, on a mission which he had made up his mind to accomplish, a purpose he had in view that would at least satisfy his own conscience.

His destination was the coast of Africa.

The African crew, which Don Moro had so well trained and disciplined, showed themselves skillful in their duties, and though the only white man, the only one on board who understood navigation, Frank Bestor arranged his watches so that he obtained ample rest for himself.

To lay a course for the day or night, and place a helmsman at the wheel was for him to follow it perfectly.

If there was a change of wind, the White Sea Chief, as the savage crew called Bestor, was aroused to see what was to be done.

If a storm came up he was called on deck, and so it was that he had no dread of the voyage coming to an unfortunate end.

After a long run the schooner sighted the coast of Africa.

Frank Bestor was a perfect seaman, and he had had a splendid schooling as a sailor and commander on the buccaneer craft of which he had been an officer.

He had made up his mind to restore to his parents the lad whom, through the command of his chief, Pierre, the Pirate, he had kidnapped.

He had tried to do justice to the lad, when he afterward understood the situation, by keeping alive in his young mind the memory of the loved ones at home, and also he had arranged for his escape when he knew that Captain Pierre intended the youth should become a buccaneer, or, if necessary, be put to death to further certain ends the chief had in view.

That Frank Bestor did his duty in this the reader has seen, leaving Pierre, the Pirate, to believe that the lad had been slain in Africa.

So to the coast of Africa the beautiful Sea Shell went, with her mysterious commander and her savage crew, and one night ran into the river where long before Captain Pierre had dropped anchor to get a cargo of slaves.

The agent, or trader, Carmal, was very anxious when he saw the schooner run in under cover of the night.

He knew that cruisers were wont to take a look up the river when they suspected foul play, but so far they had never been able to catch him in any act of slave-selling.

He was a trader of goods, he said, trading with the natives, and there was his store full of goods to prove his words.

He had heard that slavers ran in now and then and secured a cargo of slaves, but he had never seen anything of the kind himself.

If suspected by the commanders of cruisers, they had never caught the clever rascal, and so could never get a hold upon him.

But still, with his guilty conscience, Carmal was always anxious; he dreaded harm to himself, and was wont to vow that within another three months he would leave Africa, return home and enjoy his wealth.

But he wished "just so much more" to be added to his fortune before going, and when he got that his heart yearned for still more and another figure was set.

Thus it went on until he had remained years longer than he had expected he would, all from the grasping love of gold.

When the morning dawned Carmal put on his most virtuous look, dressed himself in his best clothes and went down to see the commander of the strange vessel.

He saw that she carried a strange flag, a blue field with a gold anchor in the center.

But he was not a man to be fooled by flags, for he had seen a cruiser run in under different colors and pretending to be a slaver, while slaver craft had come in boldly, masquerading as English or American vessels-of-war.

As he neared the shore he looked more attentively at the strange craft.

She was a beautiful model, carried three pivot-guns, looked trim and all that, but had the appearance of having been weather-worn for months.

But what most attracted the attention of the trader was her crew.

He saw that they were all black, and attired in a neat but picturesque uniform.

Not a white man was seen upon her decks.

"This is strange," he muttered, and calling to his boat's crew, he sprung into the stern sheets and was pulled cut toward the strange craft.

"I never saw the like of that before—a negro crew," he muttered.

"And they are Africans, too, I am sure."

As he neared the schooner a hoarse voice hailed:

"Boat 'hoys!'

"Ahoy the schooner! I am the trader and wish to come on board to see the commander."

In a moment came a response in the same hoarse voice:

"Come 'longside!"

The crew of the barge resumed their oars and the trader a moment after stood on the deck of the Sea Shell.

An African met him, and in silence.

The trader knew the types of the African thoroughly, and recognized at once what tribe those on the schooner were from.

He spoke a number of the tongues of the tribes, and at once addressed the African in his native language:

"You are of the Baka-Kogah tribe."

The African nodded.

"Are your people the crew of this vessel?"

"See our White Sea Chief," was the laconic answer, and the black sailor led the way aft to the cabin.

The trader was mystified.

He beheld something wholly new to him, something he could not understand.

What did it mean?

The Savage of the Sea had given him a hint that he was not the one to find out from.

He would soon know from the Sea Chief, as the black had called him, all about this remarkable vessel and her savage crew.

Could her captain he a savage also, he wondered.

So he entered the cabin, prepared for anything, and started as he heard the words:

"Ho, old Carmal, are you still boarding up gold in the slave-trade?"

CHAPTER XI.

LOST.

"LIEUTENANT BESTOR!"

Trader Carmal had rubbed his eyes at the salute of the schooner's commander.

He saw a luxuriously furnished cabin, and seated in an easy-chair, at the table, was a young and handsome man, whom, after a second glance, he recognized as the lieutenant of Pierre the Pirate, on his last run to the coast.

"Yes, I am Bestor, Carmal, and I have come to see you."

"Glad indeed to see you, captain, for you seem to be in command now."

"I am; but I had not expected to find you here yet, for I thought you had laid up gold enough and departed, or had been caught in your rascality by some cruiser's commander, and hanged for your crimes."

"Oh, captain, dear, do not refer to such awful things," and Carmal caressed his throat as though to see if he could feel a rope about it.

"Ah! it hits hard; but you deserve hanging, old man, as I suppose I do, too."

"But are there any cruisers about?"

"I have heard of none, sir."

"That is good, for I do not care to be caught in the river, though at sea I fear nothing afloat."

"You have a beautiful vessel, captain, and she will carry a large number back for you."

"Who wants to carry back a human cargo, Carmal?"

"Not I for one."

"Then you are not a slaver?"

"No, indeed."

"My God! you have not entered service and—"

"Don't get white with fright, Carmal—there, take a glass of brandy and collect your nerve, for I did not come here to hang you."

"Nor to arrest me?"

"No."

"The Lord be praised! but you have a black crew, captain?"

"Yes, my Savages of the Sea, and a better crew never trod a deck."

"They are Baka-Kogahs."

"Yes, Mountain Lions, as they call themselves."

"A dangerous people, sir."

"A magnificent race, you mean, and as obedient as hounds, true as steel."

"They are a part of Pierre the Pirate's cargo, and he trained them, on this vessel which he had built for his pleasure, for he has turned gentleman."

"A pirate turn gentleman, captain?"

"Yes, as you hope to do when you get gold enough, and as I may do some day."

"We are all sad frauds, Carmal."

"But, señor, I—"

"You are older in sin than any of us, and you steal the poor blacks; we sell them, so you need not preach virtue to me."

"I got Pierre's craft to come to Africa in, and—"

"Not for a cargo of blacks?"

"No, indeed!"

"I have some good ones in the corrals, and—"

"Chance made me a pirate, but I thank Heaven my heart was never in the red, thieving work, and I have sent my crimes into the sea and would forget them."

"Then why are you here, señor?" asked Carmal, anxiously.

"To see you."

"To see me?" and the trader grew more nervous.

"Yes."

"How can I serve you, señor?"

"Why did you not keep your contract with me?"

"What contract with you, Captain Bestor?"

"I paid you the price of five slaves to help me in a deceit practiced on Pierre, the Pirate, to have him believe a lad he had intentions of revenge against, had been killed by an attack of Man-Hunters."

"True, señor, and you told the captain of the lad's supposed death, and—"

"But you were to see that the lad escaped from the country, after our schooner sailed, in the first vessel that came into the river."

"I admit it, señor; but the lad never appeared after that day."

"What?"

"It is true, captain."

"What became of him?"

"Ah, señor, it is not for me to know."

"He was with your trusted slave?"

"Yes, señor, the best slave I ever had, one who, it was said, would have been king of his people if he had not been captured."

"And where is he?"

"I never saw him after he left to take charge of the lad."

"Do you mean this?"

"I do."

"He never returned?"

"No, señor."

"Nor do you know what became of him?"

"I do not."

"Did you not search for him?"

"He was to take the lad, señor, to an interior corral, distant a day's journey from here."

"I know."

"After you sailed I sent a runner to tell him to come back with the boy."

"Well?"

"The runner returned to say Koobah had not been there."

"Had not been there?"

"So it was said."

"Then he went to another corral."

"I sent to all the other corrals, and he had been to none of them."

"Did you search for him?"

"Yes, with a large force; but I could find no trace of him or the boy."

"This is remarkable."

"I fear that he and the lad were eaten by wild beasts."

"My God! I cannot believe it."

"What then, senor?"

"Could not the black have escaped to his people?"

"Senor, these Africans are peculiar, for once they come to the traders' settlements and remain here with freedom, they care not to go back to their former barbarism."

"They seem to wish to become higher, and their contact with the white races helps them greatly."

"Koobah had his own hut, and I trusted him thoroughly."

"He spoke English fairly well and seemed content, so why should he go back to his people?"

"You say he was a king?"

"He was the son of Fantah, a noted African king whose tribe were the Baka-Kogahs, or Mountain Lions, and they are a very superior race and bring the most money when I can catch them, or the Man-Hunters bring them in, which is seldom."

"Why, my crew are Baka-Kogahs."

"True, senor, I remember to have noted that fact when I came on board."

"They were of a lot of a hundred or more I sold to Pierre the Pirate."

"I will ask if they knew this fellow you say was to be their ruler?" and Frank Bestor called up the companionway for one of his savages, to enter the cabin, and a stately black at once obeyed and bowed in silence before his commander.

CHAPTER XII.

A TRAIL OF HOPE.

"MOLOK, do you know one of your people by the name of Koobah?" asked Frank Bestor, addressing the savage in his own tongue.

"Koobah, Sea Chief, is the son of our king."

"He was taken from our people long ago, and he may be dead, he may have returned and be King of the Baka-Kogab," was the reply of the black.

The Sea Chief made a motion and the African returned to the deck.

"It was evidently your slave that was Koobah the King of the Mountain Lions, Carmal."

"Yes, I am sure of it."

"And I am as sure that when he got the chance to escape he returned to his people."

"I do not think so."

"You believe that he was devoured by wild beasts?"

"Yes."

"And the lad?"

"Met his fate also."

"Yet the lad was well-armed, and your slave well knew the use of fire-arms and had weapons, while he doubtless knew how to protect himself from wild beasts."

"I will tell you now that a thought flashes upon me that you may be right," said the trader, as though trying to recall some dim remembrance.

"Yes."

"Some months ago the Man-Hunters bought me two slaves of a strange tribe."

"They had been taken together, and spoke a language that only one of my slaves could understand."

"He told me that they had been prisoners to the Mountain Lions, who had invaded their territory and captured them, and they had made their escape, when, worn out and hungry they were fast asleep and the Man-Hunters came upon them."

"Well?"

"They said something about the Mountain Lions having a young chief who led the warriors in battle and was the brother of the black king of the tribe."

Frank Bestor sprung to his feet with a cry of pleasure.

"Carmal, that young white chief is the lad I seek, and you may be sure that Koobah, your slave, took him with him to his people and they became friends."

"From those mountains the poor boy would be unable to make his escape."

"It may be so, and if so he is lost."

"Not a bit of it."

"What do you mean, senor?"

"I mean that the crew of my vessel here are Mountain Lions."

"Ah, senor?"

"They have been promised by me to return and see their people, and I meant to let them go here and pick up from some port a crew of white men."

"But they told me if they could go back to see their people and tell them of the wonders they had seen, they would again go to sea with me."

"I will tell you now that I wish to find a hiding-place for my schooner and go with them myself."

"You run a fearful risk, senor."

"It may be, and yet I think not."

"I warn you."

"I will go, so where can I hide my vessel?"

"What does she draw?"

"Ten feet."

"Her length?"

"One hundred and fifteen feet."

"Her beam?"

"Twenty-two."

"You can house topmasts easily?"

"Certainly."

"Well, if we can lighten her over a bar on which there is eight feet of water, there is a lagoon ten miles up running into the jungles that is not twenty-four feet in width."

"The water is good depth, and the bends are short but you can work around them."

"Once at the head of it and nothing can find you, for no man-of-war's boat will venture there I assure you."

"Then there I hide and you shall be well paid for your services; but you must get your people out of the way ashore so I can cross the bar at night, and be supposed to have gone to sea."

"If not, some of your hangers-on may betray me."

"True; but you will find it no easy work to cross the bar."

"I will put her guns in the long-boat, house her topmasts and bowsprit, and float them with all extra sticks, take every man off, and heel her over and tow her over."

"I can do it."

"When do you begin work, Senor Captain?"

"To-night."

"And you came here for that lad?"

"Yes; as he had not returned home I came to know why."

"And you do not wish a cargo of slaves?"

"No, sir, not I! but I will tell you what I do want."

"Yes, captain."

"I wish to get a large quantity of trinkets, beads, feathers, red, yellow, green and blue cloth, small-arms of various kinds, and anything you have to tickle the African eye."

"Put the things in boats, and send them down to me, as though to take on board my schooner."

"I will tow them over the bar, put them aboard, send your boats back, and carry the goods with me."

"You will need men packs."

"Yes, and my crew will carry the goods as presents to their people, and I wish two men to remain on my vessel as guards, for I shall take every African with me, so there will be no complaint."

"All right, Captain Bestor, all shall be as you wish," replied the trader, and he arose to go.

The moment it was dark, the Sea Chief began work.

The guns were dismounted and lowered into boats, the heavy carriages followed into others, topmasts, bowsprit, and extra spars went overboard attached to lines, and the schooner was lightened all that it could be.

Then the boats with the trader's goods having arrived, the crew of blacks towed the schooner up to the bar.

There the schooner was listed far over to starboard, and thus she was dragged over the bar without much difficulty.

The schooner was then brought back to a level keel once more, the things taken on board, and the vessel was towed up the bayou to the head of it.

Here she lay securely hidden, and two men, sent by the trader, were left in charge, while the Savages of the Sea began to prepare their packs for the inland march.

There were some to carry provisions, others weapons and ammunition, and the balance the goods.

When all were in readiness for the march, they set off at sunrise and boldly penetrated the forest, Molok, the leader of the Savages, acting as guide.

At night a camp was made, fires lighted in a circle to keep off the wild beasts; but the large force, armed as they were, little dreaded either the wild animals of the forests, the Man-Hunters, or any tribe they might pass on their journey.

But had the dangers been trebly as great, the daring outcast sailor would have undertaken the expedition to find the boy whom he had torn from his home and all dear to him, thereby bringing him to live the life he must be doing among savages.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WHITE CHIEF.

THE sun was near its setting the tenth day of the journey of Frank Bestor and his Savages of the Sea, when they came in sight of the village of King Koobah.

Their approach had been observed by the outposts and reported, and drawn up on a ridge to receive them, were the black warriors of the tribe.

Standing in their midst was a youth, whose darkly bronzed skin looked lily white in comparison with the ebony complexions of those about him.

His body was bare to the waist, and he wore a tunic of red feathers falling to his knees.

His legs were bare, but his feet were incased in shoes of roughly-tanned tiger-skin.

Upon his head was a fanciful hat of feathers

of many hues, and in one hand he carried a long lance.

In a belt about his waist were a pair of gold-mounted pistols and a knife, while a sword hung upon his left side.

His dark hair was worn long, falling upon his broad shoulders, and his face was bold, fearless and determined.

Though grown from a mere lad, when he was kidnapped, to a youth of sixteen, in this stranger among a black race the reader cannot fail to recognize Gordon Grayhurst, the victim of Pierre the pirate's hate and revenge.

He stood gazing upon the advancing force with a strange look upon his face, and the couple of hundred sable warriors about him looked upon him in a way that showed they regarded him as a superior being.

At length he seemed satisfied with his examination of the coming band, for he said aloud in the tongue of the tribe of Baka-Kogabs:

"They are our own people, and a white man leads them."

"Lay down your spears and bid them welcome."

A shout greeted his words, for now the tall, black form walking by the side of the white man was recognized, and many voices cried:

"Molok! Molok!"

The cry reached the ears of the coming party and was answered with cries of delight, and in an instant both sides were moving toward each other.

Five minutes more and the hands of Frank Bestor and Gordon Grayhurst were clasped together.

They heeded not the joyous cries of the blacks of the village, at the return of their kindred whom they had believed forever lost to them, but stood in perfect silence for an instant gazing at each other.

Then the lad spoke:

"Lieutenant Bestor, my kind friend, you came here to seek me, and God bless you for it."

It had been so long since he had spoken his own tongue that he started, hesitated and seemed confused.

"Yes, Gordon, I did come here to seek you, for I had hoped to have seen you long ago in dear old America; but, my dear boy, I have much to tell you, and we will have lots of time to talk it over, so now let me tell you how you have grown, and what a splendid savage chief you make."

"Thank you, and I believe I have become a savage."

"Are you King of the Mountain Lions?"

"Not quite, but king's adviser, commander of the warriors and in fact chief, young as I am; but come, let us go to the village, and you will find in Koobah an old friend, for he was the faithful slave of that old rascal, Carmal."

"And he and all have treated you well?"

"Oh, yes, and more than kind; but to have escaped would have been utterly impossible, though I had the thought constantly in my mind."

"Now let us go."

Turning, Gordon gave a command to his warriors and instantly the chattering voices were hushed and the men sprung into line.

Another order and the command formed on either side of the new-comers, and with Frank Bestor by his side the young Boy Chief of the Mountain Lions led the way up the mountain path that led to the village.

They reached the ridge to find there Koobah with the balance of his force ready for action, should the coming force prove to be foes.

Koobah had seen Bestor at the trader's quarters and recognized him, and Gordon Grayhurst, speaking the native language with a fluency unsurpassed by the natives themselves, told the noble king just what the new-comers were.

The king greeted Bestor most cordially, and then grasped the hand of each one of the Savages of the Sea and welcomed them home again.

Then such shouts of joy and greeting as rung through the village were enough to drive one mad.

Bestor was made the king's guest, and when he displayed his presents for him and his people, there was a grand pow-wow.

A feast was ordered, and until late in the night the enjoyment was kept up.

Bestor told how he had taken the yacht Sea Shell away from the pirate, and had brought the sable crew back to their homes, and had come to carry Gordon Grayhurst away with him.

King Koobah's face clouded at this, and so the sailor dreaded trouble, and said:

"Your people have been good to me, King Koobah, and I return them to you and their homes, asking in return for my friend who has so long been kept from his home."

For a moment King Koobah was silent.

Then he said:

"My brother, the white chief, is good and true."

"He has made my warriors braver in battle, and he has led them upon the war-trails against our foes and beaten them."

The Savages of the Sea.

"He has beaten back our foes that dared come to attack us, and the Man-Hunters have felt his anger."

"But he is my brother and has his own will, and he can go with you."

"You have been kind to me and my people."

"My warriors, who have been on the great waters with you, tell me of your goodness, and of the great things they have seen, and they say they wish to go back with you, and will bring me and my people many presents."

"When my brother is ready to go, he is free; but it will cloud my heart to have him go."

Such was the speech of the African King of a savage tribe.

Frank Bestor was delighted, for it told him there would be no trouble.

And more, it proved to him what he had already half suspected, that his crew, wild Africans though they were, were like the rest of humanity, they had seen the outer world, and they wanted to go back to it.

If they had expected never again to see their people, it might have been different; but hoping to do so, they wished to again roam the seas.

They saw that they were heroes in the eyes of even their greatest tribe chiefs, and they told of the wonders they had seen.

Not an untraveled black had a word to say, the Savages of the Sea doing all the talking.

At last it was decided that Bestor's crew should return with him, and the young White Chief should also go, but not until some days had been passed in the village.

Three days passed quickly away, and at last the Savages of the Sea, with their captain at their head, and Gordon Grayhurst at his side, bade farewell to King Koobah and his people, and started upon the march back to the coast.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE START HOMeward.

FRANK BESTOR'S estimation of the African character proved perfectly correct.

Had the Sea Shell's crew wished to remain in the village with their people, he would have allowed them to return, but he had an idea that their new life had won them away from their former barbarous one.

They had come to regard the sea as under their control, or rather not to fear its storms.

They lived well, liked the duties devolving upon them, and there was a fascination in managing a vessel that charmed them.

Compared with their former life in the mountains of Africa, they were anxious to give up the old for the new.

The result was that with few exceptions the crew of the Sea Shell returned with their captain.

Those few were either wounded, ill, or growing old.

But in their place were others glad to go, and the Boy White Chief picked out the best men he knew in the tribe, so that four score blacks started for the coast under the command of Frank Bestor.

They marched by easy stages, and, meeting a band of a hundred Man-Hunters, bunting for slaves to kidnap and sell, they attacked and nearly annihilated them.

The yacht was reached in due time, and the two guards reported that no one had been near them.

Then the vessel was towed out of the lagoon, the boats brought into requisition once more to lighten her over the bar, and in the morning Trader Carmal found the beautiful vessel at anchor in the river.

He at once repaired on board, and his eyes glistened with avariciousness as he saw the crew of splendid blacks, and calculated how much they would bring from slavers.

"Ah, senor, glad to see you back, so glad and delighted to see the young man," said the trader, as he entered the cabin.

Bestor and Gordon greeted him pleasantly, and the former said:

"You see I was right in my surmise, Carmal, that the young white chief was my friend here."

"Yes, and my slave Koobah turned out to be a king after all and ran off from me?"

"Yes."

"Well, maybe I can arrange with him to sell me some people."

"Not he."

"Oh, I mean capture them from other tribes."

"No, he is content to dwell among his people, and he knows well what the slave-trade is."

"Take my advice, Carmal, and give it up."

"I intend to, senor, just as soon as I sell the stock I now have in the corrals."

"But don't you wish to part with a few of your men, for these Mountain Lions are fine fellows?"

"No, sir!"

The stern response of Bestor fairly startled the trader; who said quickly:

"Oh, as you please; but let me tell you not to remain long in the river, for an American cruiser came in the very day you left for the lagoon, and several are on the coast."

"I shall not delay longer than to get stores

and pay you what I owe you, Carmal; but let me again advise you to give up this nefarious business of yours, for some time a cruiser will come in here and swing you up to the yard-arm."

"My God!" cried the startled trader, thoroughly frightened in spite of his effort to keep cool.

After some further conversation the trader took his leave, and having finished storing his vessel and got her into perfect trim by nightfall, Frank Bestor was preparing to sail when Carmal came off in his boat.

"Don't you want a few good slaves, captain, say a hundred, for they'll fetch a big price in the States or West Indies?"

"Carmal, you know I do not, and I advise you once more to give up your trade, for Gordon here may some time return as a naval officer, you know, and then look out for him, as he knows you as you are."

The trader winced, waved farewell, and the schooner dropped down the river out into the ocean.

Hardly had she done so, when from under the shadow of the land burst forth a red glare, followed by the deafening roar of a broadside from a large vessel-of-war.

The shots flew harmlessly over the schooner, but in a minute almost, she was crowded with canvas and flying seaward with all speed.

Out from the land crept the large vessel, crowding on sail as she came on in pursuit, and firing from her bow guns; but fortunately the schooner was not harmed, and her speed, with a stiff breeze on her quarter, sent her rapidly out of range.

"A close call that, Gordon, for she was bound into the river, and had we been half an hour later we would have run right upon her," said the sailor.

"Yes, but you are not a slaver?"

"No."

"You have no slaves on board, only your crew, that are here of their own free will."

"True; but she would have asked for my papers."

"What papers?"

"All honest craft carry papers, stating where from, where bound, and can give proofs of honesty."

"Now this craft was the yacht of a man who dwells on your coast, and I took forcible possession of her, and have no papers to show."

"Holding no commission to sail the seas, I consequently sail under no flag other than my own, with the gold anchor in the blue field."

"And if taken by a cruiser it would go hard with you?"

"I fear so; but we are not going to be taken, and my desire is to run you home, and then be guided by circumstances as to the future."

"You, of course, will not return to your lawless life, my dear friend, you who have done so much to save me from becoming a pirate under the influence of Pierre, the Pirate?"

Frank Bestor was silent for a moment, and then said slowly, and in a way that showed him to be deeply moved:

"Gordon, my life has been a strange one."

"I was born to riches, had a happy home and lived with my parents."

"My father was swindled out of his wealth, died and left my mother almost penniless."

"I went to sea to aid in her support, and when at home saved the life of a lovely girl and others with her."

"I loved her, she loved me, and when I asked her father for her he bade me match her fortune with one of my own."

"I set forth to seek it and you know the result, of how I was thrown upon the mercy of Pierre, the Pirate."

"When I had my fortune, gained by piracy I admit, I returned to claim my bride."

"She had been forced to marry another, my mother was dead, the persecution of the one who stole my intended bride having put her in her grave."

"I sought revenge, killed the man who had ruined my father, broken my mother's heart, and robbed me of the woman I loved."

"The brother of the lady was suspected of the murder of the man I killed in a duel, and seeing that he was to be hanged, I took this yacht and went and rescued him."

"Then, as you had not returned, I crossed the seas to find you."

"And this vessel?"

"To whom does it belong?"

After a moment Frank Bestor said:

"Gordon, I have a secret to tell you, so let us understand each other."

lent for some while after Bestor's remark that he had something to tell Gordon Grayhurst.

The truth was, Bestor was in a quandary.

In spite of all that had happened Pierre, the Pirate, had been his friend, and a true one.

Still he had attempted to take the life of Bestor, when the latter came to Moro Castle, and discovered in Don Juan Moro his old commander, the pirate chief.

He felt revengeful that Don Juan should have attempted his life; but he realized that it was because, having settled down at Moro Castle, he wished to wipe out every one who remembered him as he had been.

"I am even in having gotten his yacht, crew, and the treasure he had on board, so why need I push him to the wall."

"If I tell Gordon that Don Juan Moro, his nearest neighbor to Belle Eden, is his old enemy, Monsieur Belgarde, whom he found out to be Pierre, the Pirate, the lad will bring him to the gallows."

"I will keep this secret of Don Moro's, and the youth will not recognize in the master of Castle Moro his old foe, for certainly is he vastly changed by his long black beard and hair, and the accent he assumes in speaking English."

"Then, too, the Don is the pretended friend of the Grayhursts."

"I will take Gordon home, and then seek Don Moro, telling him that I return his yacht, and have brought the boy back; but if harm befalls the lad again, or any one of his family, I will lose all mercy and denounce him as Pierre, the Pirate."

"This threat will force Don Moro to terms, and cause him to beware of carrying out his revenge."

"But Gordon I will warn not to be intimate with the Don, and to gradually urge his parents to break off the friendship between them, and which friendship, on Don Moro's part, is but a mockery."

"And then what is to be my fate?"

"Alas! who can tell?" and the sailor sighed as he recalled his imbibed past and his hopeless future.

Having made up his mind what he would do, Frank Bestor said:

"Gordon, you will find changes have come over your old home, and those you knew as a lad."

"My parents?" eagerly asked the youth.

"Are well, or were, when I saw them last."

"Estelle?"

"Was also, and growing up to be a beautiful young miss."

"What are the changes, then?"

"You remember old Castle Moro?"

"But too well, for that was the home that Monsieur Belgarde, as Pierre, the Pirate, called himself, bad."

"Yes; but it is now occupied by Don Juan Moro, a kinsman, he says, of the former owner, who, you remember, with his wife and others, were murdered there one night?"

"Yes, I remember."

"This new owner I know, and when I visited him there he took me over to see your parents, for he is a man of great wealth, very courteous, and has taken a great fancy to your people."

"A Spaniard, is he?"

"A Mexican, I think he claims to be; but he has fitted up Castle Moro in magnificent style, and built this vessel for his own pleasure."

"He took me on a cruise with him, but one night of storm I went overboard, and only my being such a splendid swimmer saved my life, and I managed to reach the shore."

"It was then that I discovered that the brother of the woman I loved was to be hanged for the murder of his brother-in-law, the man whom I had killed in a duel, and so I took the Don's yacht and went north to rescue him."

"You went to Castle Moro for the yacht?"

Frank Bestor had made up his mind not to tell the truth where it would compromise Don Moro, so said:

"The yacht was blown to sea in a storm, with only her black crew on board, and so I took her without his consent, fearing I could not get her otherwise."

"Where did the Don get these savages?"

"He bought them of Pierre the Pirate whom he regarded as a slaver."

"And where is Pierre the Pirate?"

"After returning from Africa, when you were left there, he collected his riches and went no one knows where."

"If I could find that man, Captain Bestor, I would hang him to the yard-arm."

"I could not blame you, Gordon, if you did."

"Will not Don Moro be angry with you for taking his yacht?"

"You know he thinks I am dead, and believes his yacht was driven into the Gulf in a storm and foundered, so he will be so glad to see me alive and his schooner safe that I can smooth my act over with him."

"And what are my parents to understand about you?"

"I would not for the world let them know I had been a pirate, so would have them believe me to be all that was honorable."

"I will tell them I was picked up by the Sav-

CHAPTER XV.

A SECRET BETWEEN THEM.

THE Sea Shell had dropped the cruiser out of sight astern, and was bounding merrily along on her course for the shores of America.

Captain Bestor had arranged watches with Gordon Grayhurst, whose splendid seamanship he well remembered, young as he was, and Molok was made boatswain so that all was in readiness for the voyage.

Seated on deck, the two friends had been si-

The Savages of the Sea.

ages of the Sea in the Sea Shell, and having been in Africa and understanding their language, they told me of white captives that had been taken to a tribe in the interior, and I determined to seek them out and rescue them.

"In doing so I came upon you, learned who you were and brought you home."

"Then we are not supposed to have met before."

"No, it is better so, for if we admit that, then my pirate life must be made known to your parents."

"True, and I will not betray you, my good friend, but be guided by your wishes in all things."

"Then I am content, and it will be the happiest day of my life when I restore you to your home."

"But I am to tell how old Monsieur Belgarde, as we believe him to be, kidnapped me?"

"No, I would merely say that the schooner at anchor off your home was that of Pierre the Pirate, and he kidnapped you and in Africa left you for dead after a fight with the natives."

"I'll not forget, Captain Bestor, and it is best to tell all as you wish."

And so it was decided, and Frank Bestor felt happy at heart because, in returning Gordon Grayhurst he would not have to brand himself as an ex-pirate.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RETURN.

It was a beautiful night on the Gulf Coast. The white walls and towers of Castle Moro glimmered in the moonlight, and nestling away amid the magnolias and live-oaks, the beautiful home of Belle Eden looked indeed like an abiding place in a Garden of Eden, for from hundreds of flowers perfume was wafted over the scene.

Seated upon the piazza of Belle Eden, enjoying the moonlit scene were two persons, Mrs. Grayhurst and Estelle.

A short distance off, unseen by the mother and daughter, seated on a rustic bench in the shadow of a tree, were a pair of dusky lovers, one the negro valet of Don Juan, the other the quadroon maid of Mrs. Grayhurst.

Suddenly Sable, the valet of Don Moro uttered an exclamation of surprise that caused the quadroon to glance quickly in the direction of the bay, and there she beheld a vessel coming to anchor in the Belle Eden harborage.

Instantly she ran to the mansion and acquainted her mistress with the fact, for the foliage about the piazza had hidden the harbor from the view of Mrs. Grayhurst and Estelle.

"It is the Shark, Don Moro's yacht," said Mrs. Grayhurst, after glancing at the vessel.

"We are to receive a call, Estelle."

"I am so glad, for we have not seen uncle for several days," answered Estelle, who was very fond of Don Moro, and, at his request had called him uncle since his coming to dwell at his plantation near Belle Eden.

After more closely examining the vessel, Mrs. Grayhurst said:

"Estelle, hand me the spy-glass, please, for that cannot be the yacht of Don Moro, as her sails look so dark."

Estelle took the spy-glass from the bracket where it was kept, and handed it to her mother, who at once turned it upon the vessel.

"It is not the Shark, for her sails are old, and as the moonlight falls upon her hull it appears weather-beaten; but I think her crew are blacks."

"Estelle, I do believe it is the Sea Shell, Don Moro's old vessel."

Estelle took the glass and turned it upon the vessel.

"Mother, a boat is coming ashore and there are four black oarsmen in it, and two officers in uniform in the stern-sheets."

"I see the moonlight glimmering upon their gold lace and buttons."

Mrs. Grayhurst was in a quandary as to who were her visitors.

The vessel certainly appeared to be the yacht Sea Shell, that had so mysteriously disappeared from her anchorage in the Cove at Castle Moro.

But why had it come to Belle Eden Harbor?

The two persons in the stern, the glass revealed, were neither of them Don Moro.

So the mother and her daughter waited.

The boat landed at the Belle Eden wharf, and the two officers slowly approached the mansion.

As they drew near one of them lagged back, the other advancing.

As he beheld Mrs. Grayhurst and Estelle upon the piazza, he doffed his cap, and bowing low said:

"My dear Mrs. Grayhurst, you see I am not dead, as you doubtless supposed—you remember Frank Bestor, I hope?"

"Don Moro's friend, indeed I do, and we did believe you lost, and mourned your untimely end."

"This is indeed a pleasure to see you alive and you must tell us all about your escape."

"You remember Estelle?"

"Yes indeed, madam, and with much pleas-

ure; but I have some good tidings for you and Miss Estelle, Mrs. Grayhurst."

"Indeed! and what does Don Moro say to your miraculous escape?"

"I have not yet seen the Don, so he knows not of my being alive."

"I came at once to your house, for, as I said, I have tidings that will make your heart glad, for there is a much greater surprise for you than seeing me alive, for, when I escaped death, one most dear to you also escaped the fate you deemed he had met."

Mrs. Grayhurst sank back in her chair, and for an instant Frank Bestor supposed she would swoon; but she checked his movement to call aid, and Estelle gave the key note to the thought that had flashed upon her mother, by uttering the words:

"Brother Gordon!"

"Yes, your son escaped death, Mrs. Grayhurst, and I have brought him home with me."

He turned quickly away as he spoke and strode rapidly down the gravel walk until the one who had accompanied him stepped out from behind a cape jessamine bush and met him.

"I have told your mother and sister—your father I did not see—come!"

He led the youth forward and a moment after with a cry that broke from the mother's heart she sprang toward her son.

But she hesitated, started back as she beheld the tall, splendid form of the youth, and seemed to doubt.

But Gordon Grayhurst said earnestly:

"I am your son, mother, changed by years from a lad to almost a man."

There was no doubt now, and the scene that followed was one to touch any heart.

Frank Bestor had turned away, as though to retrace his steps to the shore; but Gordon Grayhurst called him back and as he did so, Sable, Don Moro's valet, who had seen and heard all, slipped away through the foliage and started like a deer for Castle Moro.

"No, no, Captain Bestor, do not leave us, for I wish my mother and sister to know that I owe my escape to you and you alone."

Then turning to his mother he continued:

"Mother, I have much to tell you, but let me say that this gentleman found me far in the interior of Africa, a dweller among a tribe of blacks, and he rescued me from a life you can well understand."

"But let me ask of my father—"

A cry from the mother's lips, a low moan from Estelle checked his words.

He seemed to know just what the cry and moan meant, for he bowed his head in silence.

But Mrs. Grayhurst controlled herself by an effort, and said:

"My son, alas, your father is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, we two are all you have to love you now."

He brushed his hand hastily across his eyes, his lips quivered; but only for an instant, for he had been reared in a rough school, and he was master of himself at once.

"We have much to tell each other, mother, but now let us go into the house, and when I tell you, Estelle, that Captain Bestor and I are both dying of hunger, for one of dear old Belle Eden's suppers I remember so well, you will take the hint, I know."

Estelle bounded away to call the old negro butler, and soon after the servants crowded in to welcome back their young master as from the grave.

It was late when Mrs. Grayhurst, her son and Estelle retired that night, and when they did the mother and sister knew the story of Gordon's adventures and rescue, the latter told as Frank Bestor had urged it should be.

As for Frank Bestor, he returned on board ship soon after supper, but promised to breakfast at Belle Eden in the morning.

Once on board the Sea Shell Frank Bestor entered the cabin, and soon after returned to his boat and rowed away in the direction of Castle Moro.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SAILOR'S SUSPICIONS.

FRANK BESTOR was determined that Don Juan Moro should not remain longer in doubt as to his being alive or not.

From personal reasons he had withheld the real identity of the pirate from Gordon Grayhurst, feeling confident that the youth would never recognize the master of Castle Moro as his old foe, Pierre the Pirate, so greatly had the beard and long hair, with the assumed accent and surroundings changed the buccaneer chief.

But he was resolute in his determination that Don Moro should suffer unless he vowed not to harm one of the name of Grayhurst.

He had gleaned from Mrs. Grayhurst that her husband had been killed in a duel with a dissipated young spendthrift planter, who had since reformed, and was living in fine style at his old home.

She had also said that Don Moro had been the second of her husband, and in this Frank Bestor thought he could see the fine revengeful hand of the pirate.

So he decided to go at once to visit Don Moro, and arming himself thoroughly, he entered his boat and was rowed down the bay shore to the cove of Castle Moro.

Had he glanced seaward he would have beheld a fast-disappearing sail glimmering in the moonlight.

Arriving at the wharf, Frank Bestor sprung out, and, at a word from him, two of his Sea Savages followed him.

He had no idea of being caught in a trap should Don Juan, startled and amazed by his appearance, feel in a murderous mood.

Arriving at the mansion, the sailor knocked loudly.

All was dark within, and no sound of coming footsteps met his ears.

Finding no response to his repeated knocks, he at last went around to the rear of the mansion.

The Don was surely away from home he feared.

Mrs. Grayhurst had not spoken of the new yacht he had built, so that Bestor knew nothing about it.

A glimmer of a light in a distant outhouse caused him to go thither, and in response to his call, an old negro opened the door.

It was the butler of the mansion, and Don Moro had left him in charge.

Standing in the shadow of a tree, Frank Bestor said:

"I could arouse no one by knocking at the mansion, so came here."

"Who is you, massa?"

"An old friend of Don Moro."

"Waal, that are too bad, 'cause marsa sail a hour ago in his yacht."

"He has gone?"

"Yas, sah."

"In his yacht, you say?"

"Yas, sah, in de Shark, which he has built just like de Sea Shell which were lost at sea, sah."

"Ah! and when will he return?"

"Not for mighty long time, sah, for he done gone to Mexico and Spain, sah, on important business."

"Mexico and Spain?"

"Yas, sah."

"And he sailed an hour ago?"

"Yas, sah, 'bout that long, for I seen him go and I hadn't been long asleep when I hear you call, sah."

"Who went with him?"

"Nobody, sah, but de crew, and Sable."

"Sable is his valet?"

"Yas, sah."

"And the crew?"

"All black folks, sah, but not like dem wild African niggers he hab on de Sea Shell."

"Dese was Christian black folkes from de plantation."

"I see; well, I'll return to Belle Eden where I am visiting."

"Good-night old man, and thank you for your information," and Frank Bestor retraced his steps to the boat, musing as he went along.

"Gone, and an hour ago, and, for some time.

"This looks suspicious, for it appears as though he had seen the Sea Shell come in and suspected something, so fled."

"But, wherever he has gone I will follow him, for he shall be warned not to harm the Grayhursts, as I will be unmerciful if he does and the gallows shall be his end."

"To-morrow I will know better whether this was flight on his part from knowledge of our return, or some crime of deviltry that he had planned."

It was late when Frank Bestor returned on board his vessel.

He saw that the lights in Belle Eden had been extinguished and the place seemed buried in slumber, the young heir once more resting his head beneath the boughs of his boyhood, and the mother happy at least in receiving back from the dead, as she had mourned him, one who had been so dear to her heart.

At the promised hour Frank Bestor started for Belle Eden, and Gordon and Estelle met him as he landed, and gave him a warm welcome.

Mrs. Grayhurst, with a glad light in her sad, beautiful face, greeted him at the door, and all went in to breakfast.

During the morning Frank Bestor learned from Gordon all that had happened, and of the fatal duel with Shannon Vere, which had taken his father from him.

"And Don Moro was the second of both of them, you say?" asked Bestor.

"Yes, and mother says he acted nobly, doing all in his power to prevent the affair."

"And this young man, Vere, is now living near you?"

"Yes, he returned upon receiving a legacy, bought off the mortgage on his home and negroes, and lives like an exile, mother told me; but he has always been friendly with Don Moro."

"Ah!" said Bestor.

Then he set to thinking, and Mrs. Grayhurst joined them with a note she had received from Don Moro, telling her that special and important news received had forced him to set sail

during the night for Mexico and Spain, to be gone an indefinite time.

This letter set Bestor to thinking the more, and he made up his mind that he should make a visit to Shannon Hall to see the young duelist.

"He must know something of the movements of Don Moro."

"This friendship between them looks suspicious to me, where the Don was second for both Vere and Mr. Grayhurst, and while the latter was killed, the former suddenly received a legacy from some unknown quarter."

"Knowing the Don as I do, knowing that with all of his professed friendship for the Graybursts, revenge and hatred, from some unknown reason, was at the bottom of it all, I feel certain that he can be guilty of anything against those he hates, and so I will have a talk with this young reformed spendthrift."

"This letter, received by Mrs. Grayhurst, convinces me the more that Don Moro was aware of our coming, and so fled, and if any one can give me a clew, it will be this planter of Shannon Hall."

So mused the sailor, and having made up his mind as to his course, he determined to go that night, pleading illness so as to go early on board his vessel, but to start for Shannon Hall, for he did not wish even Gordon Grayhurst to know of his visit.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

GORDON GRAYHURST would have it so, that Frank Bestor was to take all his meals at Belle Eden, and in this he was seconded warmly by his mother and Estelle, who had taken a great fancy to the outcast sailor on his visit to them with Don Moro, and especially now that they knew him as the rescuer of Gordon Grayhurst from a loathsome captivity in the wilds of Africa.

The sailor had expressed his intention of running his vessel into the Pascagoula River to refit wholly, for without papers he dared not go into a regular seaport.

He could have a lugger bring him, from New Orleans or Pensacola, new canvas and spars, in fact, all he needed to put the vessel in splendid trim, and then he was determined to go on the search for Don Juan Moro.

Having no settled purpose in view as to the future, he felt that he could very readily devote his time to the finding of Don Moro and warning him against ever attempting any act against the Grayhursts.

Then he had the thought of coming to the Gulf shores and purchasing a home there and passing the remainder of his life in quiet.

That he would ever see Miriam again, the woman whom he loved, whom he felt had loved him, he did not believe, for his own hand had dug the grave between them, the grave that divided their lives.

On the evening which he had decided upon to visit Shannon Hall, Frank Bestor pleaded illness, and went on board his vessel immediately after tea.

Then he ordered a boat lowered, with six oarsmen and a coxswain, all well-armed, and pulled away up the coast in the direction of Shannon Hall.

Shannon Vere lived indeed like a hermit, since his reformation.

He had no intimates, and the only one he visited was Don Juan Moro.

His former evil companions he had cut dead, and since, in revenge, they had attacked his house one night and been sadly worsted, they had dreaded to meet him, and he was left severely alone.

If he visited the town he returned the bows of those who spoke to him; but it was thought he sadly felt the killing of Gaston Grayhurst in the duel.

His changed life had caused many planters to wish to once more become friendly with him, and as he was reputed to possess a vast fortune, designing mothers were very willing to cultivate him where there were marriageable daughters.

But Shannon Vere refused to be cultivated, for, though ever calmly courteous to all, he yet encouraged no friendships and so remained alone in his handsome house, seeming content with his own company.

Seated in his handsome library, the evening of Frank Bestor's visit, he had not the remotest idea of being disturbed by a caller.

He was somewhat surprised therefore when Buck his faithful old colored major domo of the estate, put his head in the door and said:

"A gemman to see you, sah."

"A gentleman to see me?"

"Yas, massa."

"Who is he?"

"Don't know, sah; but he is a sailor officer, sah."

"Ask him in," and the face of the planter slightly changed color, while he hastily moved to a seat at his desk and half-opened a drawer as though to have a weapon within ready to hand if need-d.

With a guilty conscience for deeds of the past,

Shannon Vere looked upon every stranger with suspicion.

A moment after Frank Bestor entered the library.

He wore his uniform, and his dark, handsome face and fine form at once attracted the gaze of Shannon Vere.

The planter arose politely, and bowing, said:

"May I ask who I have the honor of welcoming to Shannon Hall?"

"My name is Frank Bestor, sir, and I am an old friend of Don Juan Moro, hence my visit to you."

"Be seated, Mr. Bestor, and say how I can serve Don Juan's friend."

Frank Bestor sat down and could not but admit that the young spendthrift appeared to be very much of a gentleman.

Then Shannon Vere ordered decanters and refreshments, and said:

"You find the Don away from home, and for an indefinite time."

"Yes, greatly to my regret; but I came with the hope that you could give me a clew to enable me to find the Don."

"I am sorry to say that I cannot, sir."

"You may recall me the better when I tell you that I visited the Don something over a year ago, and in a cruise with him in his yacht, was lost overboard in a storm."

"Ah, yes, and he yet believes you dead."

"Permit me to congratulate you upon your escape."

"Thank you, and it was a narrow one, I assure you; but I am a good swimmer, was picked up at sea, and the vessel crossed the path of the Don's yacht, Sea Shell, which was aimlessly drifting about the Gulf, for her crew, good sailors as they are, could not navigate her."

"Yes, she was blown to sea in a storm, and we all believed she had foundered, and so the Don built another craft, just like the Sea Shell, calling her the Shark."

"So I was told; but I was put on the Sea Shell, found her crew determined to go to Africa, so carried them there."

"Upon my arrival on the coast, I learned of a white boy captive held by the tribe to which the Sea Shell's crew belonged, so I went with them to their village, and discovered it to be none other than young Gordon Grayhurst, who had been supposed to be lost in a storm on the coast when a mere lad."

"And you found the lad?"

"I did."

"Thank God for that!"

"His mother's heart then has some joy to fill it," and the fervent manner in which Shannon Vere spoke told Bestor he was in earnest in what he said.

"Yes, I found the lad, and the African crew, having seen their kindred, were willing to put again to sea with me, and so I returned to America, bringing young Grayhurst with me, and also to restore the Don his vessel."

"I heard that a strange craft, strongly resembling the Shark, was at anchor off Belle Eden, so I went to the cupola and had a look at her."

"I am glad that young Grayhurst is once more at home; but how was it that he was not drowned as supposed?"

"He was captured by a pirate craft then on the coast; but can you give me any information, Mr. Vere, of the Don?"

"He left hastily, it seems, and I had a note from him the morning after his departure, telling me he had been called away for an indefinite period, and to look after Castle Moro for him."

"He wrote Mrs. Grayhurst also, and said he was called to Mexico, and perhaps to Spain."

"I really wish I could know where to cruise to find him."

Shannon Vere was silent for some little time.

He remembered that Frank Bestor had visited the Don as his friend, and had been supposed to be lost at sea while on a cruise with him.

He had not fathomed the fact that hatred and revenge were at the bottom of the Don's pretended friendship for the Graybursts, nor did he know that he had been the tool of the cunning buccaneer.

Bestor had brought back home Gordon Grayhurst, and this must give him a warm place in the heart of the mother.

He had also been the friend of the Don; but would it be wise to give him the Don's address?

He decided to make no mistake, for the Don held over him, in the knowledge of certain cruises he had been guilty of, a two-edged sword that could cut both ways.

He would plead ignorance of the Don's address.

So he could thus make no mistake.

"I am sorry, sir, but I do not know how to direct you, so as you can find Don Juan Moro."

"I regret it also; but I shall go in search of him."

"Could I leave a letter for him in your keeping, should I miss him?"

"Certainly, sir."

"And write it here?"

"With pleasure, sir," and hastily closing the drawer Shannon Vere resigned his place at the desk to the sailor.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN CHASE.

FRANK BESTOR seated himself at the desk, while the planter threw himself into an easy-chair near.

The quill pen was dipped in the ink-horn, and the eyes of the sailor were upon the paper before him, when suddenly they fell upon a slip of paper beneath a weight and were riveted there.

What he read was:

"DON JUAN MORO,

AMERICAN CRUISING YACHT SHARK,

Vera Cruz, Mexico,

In care SENOR RAFAEL CAMBRAS."

Frank Bestor shewed no sign of the secret he had discovered.

There was the address of the Don and in his own handwriting which the sailor knew well.

He impressed it upon his memory, then moved the weight so as to hide it, and began his letter.

He wrote but a few lines, saying that Mr. Shannon Vere would tell him of his escape from death and subsequent adventures, and that he was going to search for him, but if unsuccessful would return at a certain time.

The letter was left unsealed, and thanking the planter Frank Bestor said:

"I leave this in your care, Mr. Vere; but now let me speak to you, sir, upon a matter that I hope you will not think me presumptuous in referring to."

"Well, Mr. Bestor, what is it?"

"You are aware that young Grayhurst is gaining rapidly to man's estate, and his is a nature to feel the death of his father at your hands most keenly, so I beg that you will not be the one to keep up the feud which the duel between Mr. Grayhurst and yourself sowed the seeds of."

Shannon Vere but his lips somewhat nervously, but replied:

"Mr. Bestor, I am not one to allow interference in my affairs; but I believe you speak from friendship for Mr. Gordon Grayhurst, so overlook it."

"You need not, sir, for I certainly am willing to put myself in the place of my young friend, if you deem it necessary to push your quarrel with the father to the son."

"It remains, sir, for the son of the man I killed to seek to avenge his father."

"Should he demand a meeting, I will be wholly at his service, much as I would regret it."

"I am glad to hear you say you would regret it, sir; but let me now ask you to pledge yourself, if Mr. Gordon Grayhurst challenges you, that you have given me the prior right of meeting, and postpone any affair with him, should I be absent, until you can meet me."

"That is a strange request, sir."

"It is, sir, but I make it as a demand, if you refuse it as a request."

To the surprise of Frank Bestor, the young planter, who he had hoped would refuse, said promptly:

"I grant your request, sir, or demand, whichever way you put it."

"I consider myself as pledged to fight you, before I can meet Mr. Gordon Grayhurst in a duel, should he desire such meeting to avenge his father."

"Yes, sir, and thank you," answered Bestor.

But he was disappointed, for he had hoped that Shannon Vere would refuse, and thus he could force him to meet him at once.

The truth was, he feared that Gordon would challenge the slayer of his father, and he was determined to at once anticipate him by a meeting with Vere, and either cripple him for life or kill him, thus saving his young friend, as he dreaded, from certain death.

But with the pledge of Shannon Vere to first meet him, he had to be content, and soon after he took his leave.

Returning to his vessel, the next morning he sailed for Pascagoula, and soon had his craft in the hands of ship carpenters.

The Belle Eden Plantation lugger had been dispatched for New Orleans, via Lake Ponchartrain, for stores, canvas, and all needed to fit out with, and by her return the beautiful vessel was in splendid trim.

Her topmasts, bowsprit, and main-boom had been replaced by longer spars, to give her more sail-carrying capacity, and everything had been done to increase her speed and seaworthiness.

In two weeks' time the Sea Shell was in perfect condition for her cruise, and after running up to Belle Eden for a day, Frank Bestor determined to start in search of Don Moro.

Since his return home Gordon Grayhurst had become a great hero, and all in the neighborhood had hastened to call upon him and congratulate him upon his escape, all but one, who dared not cross the threshold, and that one was Shannon Vere.

Of his adventures Gordon Grayhurst had little to say, other than that he had been kidnapped by Pierre the Pirate, who had left him on the coast of Africa, where he had been captured by natives and held until rescued by Captain Frank Bestor, the friend of Don Moro.

The Savages of the Sea.

When ready to sail on his cruise, Gordon had asked:

"Captain Bestor, where are you going?"

"On a cruise in the hope of finding Don Moro, for I wish to return his vessel to him."

"You are aware that you sail her without a commission, or flag?"

"True, but if picked up by a cruiser, I have Don Moro's papers on board, you know, and they give her the right to cruise as a yacht."

"Yes; but after you find the Don?"

"Well, I think I will get him to sell me the yacht, and then, as your mother said she thought it best for you to go to England to see about your estates there, I will run you over there."

"You are very kind, and I will accept your offer, for we can get a commission for the Sea Shell from the Government; but I hope you will also carry out your idea to buy a place near us, and I will look out for one for you."

"But, my dear friend, I hate to see you leave us, for I fear harm may befall you."

"Oh no, I can take care of myself, and you do the same; but you must make me a promise, Gordon."

"Well?"

"You did not say so, but knowing you as I do, I saw it in your face when your mother told you of your father's death, to hold his slayer responsible for his act."

"You read me aright, my friend."

"Well, what I ask of you is a promise that you will make no effort to open this feud unless I am with you."

"But—"

"Will you not promise me this, Gordon?"

"I will, my friend," and the youth grasped the hand of his friend warmly.

That night the Sea Shell set sail in chase of Don Moro.

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE SHARK'S WAKE.

THE Sea Shell never changed a sail, from her hoisting anchor off Belle Eden, to her reaching Vera Cruz, for the wind was fresh and favorable, and she made the run in splendid style.

She came to an anchor after nightfall, for Frank Bestor was anxious to avoid all notice possible, and lowering a boat he took a pull among the vessels anchored there.

Nowhere did he see the Shark.

"I have come too late," he muttered, and then after a moments thought he pulled for the town.

Landing, and speaking Spanish fluently, he had no difficulty in finding his way to the address given on the slip of paper he had seen on Shannon Vere's desk.

It had given the address of Don Juan Moro as being in the care of Rafael Cambras.

The place of business of the Senor Cambras was readily found.

But it was closed for the night.

He saw by the sign that the Senor Cambras was a shipping merchant.

"That implies a great deal," the sailor muttered, and then he added:

"It seems to me that I have heard the name before."

"I will seek his home, for I do not wish to remain in port if Don Moro is not here."

So he sought the home of the Mexican shipping merchant.

It was well situated, and appeared to be the abode of wealth.

A peon servant said that his master was in, and soon after Frank Bestor stood in the presence of the merchant.

Senor Rafael Cambras was a small, dark-faced man, with piercing dark eyes, and the air of one who had been reared in good society.

He was dressed stylishly, and appeared to be surprised at the late call of his visitor.

"Be seated, señor, and say to what circumstance I am indebted for the honor of your call?" he said coldly.

"Senor Cambras, pardon my late call, but I arrived in port to-night, and not finding the one I seek here, was anxious to follow, as my business with him is most important."

"I refer to Don Juan Moro, whose address was given me in your care."

Frank Bestor saw the Mexican start at the name of Don Moro, and he asked quickly:

"Are you the friend of Don Moro?"

"Oh, yes, señor, and now I recall having before met you, and you may remember me when I tell you that I was first officer of Captain Pierre, when we delivered to you one night a lugger load of slaves we had brought from the coast of Africa."

"Sh!" and Senor Cambras drew his chair nearer to the visitor, and continued:

"Yes, yes, but breathe not a word here, for I am a merchant in Vera Cruz, allied with shipping interests, while in Cuba I have an agent who deals in a different kind of merchandise for me."

"Yes, I remember you now."

"And I know you, señor, as Senor Rafael only; but can you tell me of the Don?"

"What do you know of him?"

"That he came to Vera Cruz in his yacht Shark, giving his address to your care, and here I expected to find him."

"He spoke of no one seeking him here, but requested me to keep letters if any came for him."

"No, he did not expect me, for the reason he believed me dead."

"I was lost overboard from his yacht one night in a storm, but was picked up and my life saved."

"His yacht, with her African crew, was blown out to sea one night from her anchorage, and I recognized her and took command, for her men could not find their way back."

"They demanded to go to Africa, so I took them there, and as they were willing to come again to sea with me, I sought the Don's house."

"Where does he live?"

"That I decline to say, señor; but I discovered that he came here, so followed him."

"And you have your vessel with you?"

"I have."

"With her African crew?"

"Yes, señor."

"The craft is the counterpart of the vessel the Don has?"

"It is, for the two are sister ships."

The señor was lost in thought an instant, and then said:

"Señor, you know me as the purchaser of African slaves, and, as you are the Don's friend, I may as well tell you that he has gone to Africa for a cargo, and hopes while he is away certain matters may arise to promote his interests greatly."

"He sailed two days ago, though for what part of the African coast I do not know."

"I think I can find the part of the coast to which he has gone."

"Then you will follow him there?"

"Oh, yes, señor, for it is important that I find the Don."

"Then so much the better, for I will give you an order for a cargo of blacks, paying you the largest price for them I can."

Frank Bestor said nothing, but his thoughts were busy.

To refuse would be impolite under the circumstances, so he responded:

"You know, señor, that the vessel I am in belongs to the Don, crew and all; but I will tell him that I saw you and he will doubtless wish me to accept your offer."

"I hope so, and he knows just where to deliver the slaves, so with both vessels I shall indeed have a fine lot of blacks."

"Yes, sir; but as I wish to be off I will say good-night," and Frank Bestor arose.

But the Señor Cambras ordered wine and refreshments, and it was midnight before the sailor took his departure.

Going to the shore he took his boat out to the Sea Shell, which at once spread sail and went flying away in the wake of the Shark.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SLAVER HEARS UNPLEASANT NEWS.

CARMAL the trader had not yet gotten quite enough, in his own mind, to enable him to leave Africa and live in the style of luxury he had planned for himself.

He still wanted more, and, as was his habit, had arranged, after selling the next batch of slaves, to set sail from the coast.

One morning he awoke to find a vessel in the river.

He gazed anxiously from his window and recognized a craft which he supposed he had seen before.

"Is she still under her old commander, or has she been taken by a cruiser and come back as a vessel-of-war?

"When Captain Bestor was here he gave me a warning I wish I had heeded."

"I wonder what brings Bestor back here again?"

"Ab! a boat is coming ashore."

The trader hastily dressed himself, and then stepped to the window again.

An exclamation of surprise broke from his lips and then followed the words:

"Why, it is Pierre, the Pirate!"

It was the pirate, and he came rapidly up the hill to the trader's home.

Carmal had at once called a servant and ordered a sumptuous breakfast, for the slave-dealer was a *bon vivant* in his way.

Then he met Don Juan Moro at the door.

"My dear Captain Pierre, I am delighted to see you; but what brings you here again, when I supposed you were so rich you had gone out of business entirely?"

"I came for a cargo of blacks, for one thing, Carmal, and for another, to learn something from you."

"Certainly, captain, I can give you as fine a lot as you ever saw."

"But have you your black crew with you?"

"No, for as they were American negroes I would not bring them, so left them in Mexico to await my return, and shipped a crew of Mexicans."

"Negroes could tell bad tales, Carmal."

"True; but I thought your African crew could be trusted?"

"Ha! what know you of my Africans?"

"Why, Captain Bestor came here with them, the Mountain Lions, they were."

"By the great Cæsar's ghost! but this is what I would know."

"I can tell you all I know."

"When was Bestor here?"

"Six months ago."

"In what?"

"Yonder vessel."

"Not he; but it was in her sister ship."

"They are as like as two sea gulls."

"True, for yonder craft was built on the model of the other."

"But he had an African crew with him?"

"Yes."

"That is just what I would find out."

"Why did he come?"

"He told me he had heard of white boy chief among the tribe known as Mountain Lions, and believed it was the youth who you remember was reported killed by the Man-Hunters in their attack upon the party going to the corral after blacks."

"Bestor said that the boy was killed and he buried him."

Carmal felt that he was treading on dangerous ground.

He too had been in the plot for Gordon Grayhurst's escape.

So he said:

"So he did bury him, captain; but he did it hastily, and the Man-Hunters dug him up and found he was not much hurt."

"They were attacked by Mountain Lions, the boy was captured and carried to their village, and Bestor came in, in what I should say was yonder vessel, went with the crew to their mountain retreat and brought the boy back."

"How did he know the boy was there?"

Carmal was a ready liar, so answered:

"He had picked up a wrecked slaver's boat, I believe, and heard so from the blacks."

"Ah! and he dared go to their village after the boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"And then?"

"He set sail, he said, to carry the boy back to his home, I suppose."

"Carmal!"

"Yes, captain."

"That man Bestor is a traitor to me."

"Indeed, señor?"

"Yes, for he got possession of my yacht, Sea Shell, in some way, with her crew of Savages, and came here after that boy."

"I came here to know if Bestor and the boy were really alive, and now I know there is no doubt of it."

"Bestor is alive, Captain Pierre, and so is the boy."

"I am sure of it now; but he has gone to America to do me harm, and yet I am not one to be easily gotten rid of."

"There must be a settlement between us for his ruining my plans—no, not ruining them, for they are only delayed, as I shall yet gain my ends."

"But let me not dwell on what is to be, but turn to business."

"You have some good slaves?"

"I have, the best."

"How many?"

"What can you carry?"

"Six hundred comfortably."

"You can have them."

"Mind you, no ancient ones, no sickly people whom I pay for and will have to throw overboard before three days out."

"I will give you the best."

"See that you do, for this is only a special venture of mine to make money while I am waiting to see how a certain affair turns out."

"I will know all by the time I get back, and if certain schemes of mine are thwarted the amount of this cargo of blacks will come in well, and anyhow the gold will be acceptable."

"You must be a very rich man, Captain Pierre," ventured the trader.

"That is none of your business."

"I am rich, but like you I want more, and some day it may cost me my neck, as it will you."

"Heaven forbid! I will soon give up my business here, and—"

night, and dropped anchor half a mile below them.

In the early dawn he saw a schooner outlined distinctly, and as the mist swept away, he uttered an exclamation of commingled surprise, alarm and anger.

"It is my schooner, Sea Shell, by the gods of war!" he muttered.

Then his men were called hastily to quarters, for he felt that the schooner had dogged him to the African Coast.

He had a small crew, not over forty men, but he was not one to be taken without a desperate fight.

The schooner below him meanwhile lay quietly at anchor.

Not a soul was visible upon her decks, her sails were neatly furled, and she presented the appearance of a vessel fearless of all danger.

The Don regarded her attentively with his glass.

But not a soul did he see on board.

Carmal the trader was also regarding her with the deepest interest and considerable anxiety.

He saw that the craft was the twin of the Don's schooner.

At length a man came on deck on the stranger and glanced about him.

He raised a glass to his eye and turned it upon the shores in a quiet way, sweeping them as far up as the quarters of the trader.

Then, as though he had just discovered the schooner, he turned his glass upon her.

He did not show surprise or excitement, but simply took a long survey of the craft.

Then he spoke to some one, and half a dozen forms appeared, a boat was lowered, and soon after it pulled away from the schooner.

It contained two oarsmen and a coxswain.

The latter bore a note addressed to:

"CAPTAIN PIERRE,

"Schooner Shark."

As the boat neared the schooner the Don himself hailed:

"Boat ahoy!"

The coxswain in response made no reply but held up his note.

"Come alongside, you black imp," cried the Don, and a moment after the black coxswain ascended the gangway and stood before his former master.

"Yes, I know you; but what have you there?" and the Don recognized one of his Savages of the Sea, but the latter looked as innocent as though he had never seen him before.

The Don read the letter, which was as follows:

"Captain Pierre will see by this note that I miraculously escaped death when washed overboard from his schooner in Mobile Bay, and that I have come into possession of his craft, the Sea Shell.

"This, with other things I desire to explain; and for that purpose have followed in his wake to the coast of Africa, and trust that he will grant me an interview on board his vessel.

"FRANK BESTOR."

The Don's brow clouded as he read this.

It was evident that he was in a quandary.

Was it a trap in which to insnare him?

A moment's thought convinced him that if so Frank Bestor would hardly place himself in his power by coming on board the Shark.

So he went into the cabin, and wrote in reply:

"I will be glad to see Captain Bestor on board my yacht, and have him breakfast with me.

"DON JUAN MORO."

The black who gave him the note might have been dumb for all the Don could get out of him, for he would make no response to any query addressed to him.

Then he departed, and upon returning to the Sea Shell, the boat remained alongside but a short while, and then set off again for the Shark.

This time the sable coxswain's place was occupied by a white man.

"It is Bestor," muttered the Don, as he closed his glass and went into his cabin, after telling his first mate to bring the visitor at once to the cabin.

The mate met the visitor at the gangway, and there was something about the man that made him salute with marked politeness.

Frank Bestor was dressed in uniform, wore his sword and a pistol in his belt.

"I would see Captain Pierre," he said.

"He bade me take you to him, señor," replied the mate, who, with the remainder of the crew knew the Don only as Captain Pierre, his name as a buccaneer.

He led the way to the cabin as he spoke, and Frank Bestor cast his eyes over the beautiful vessel and could not but remark:

"They are indeed twin craft; but I believe the Sea Shell can outsail her.

"Maybe there will be a chase to find out some day."

He had now reached the cabin companion-way, and looking down into the luxurious sea home of the Don the mate called out:

"The captain of the strange schooner, señor."

The Don arose indolently from an easy-chair where he had thrown himself.

He was perfectly cool, for he always was upon momentous occasions.

He smiled pleasantly as he stepped forward, upon the entrance of Frank Bestor, and said, in his most winning manner:

"Captain Bestor, you are most welcome, and I am happy to congratulate you upon your remarkable escape from death the last time we met."

CHAPTER XXIII.

FACE TO FACE.

To any one who had not known the circumstances of their last meeting, there would have been not an atom of suspicion that the Don was not the friend of Frank Bestor.

He could not but know that Bestor was aware that he had drugged his wine, when he was a guest on board, with the intention of getting rid of him as one he feared might betray Don Moro as the one-time pirate, Captain Pierre.

How he had escaped after staggering on deck drugged, and being tossed into the sea by him, he did not worry himself about.

The fact remained that he had escaped and that was all-sufficient.

He knew also that Bestor had restored to his family Gordon Grayhurst, and more, was then on his track in his own vessel which he had mysteriously obtained possession of.

For all this he received Frank Bestor with a cordiality and courtly manner that almost unnerved the visitor, well as he knew his old commander.

The Don having thus greeted his visitor, continued:

"Be seated, and let us have a glass of brandy together in honor of your visit, and to sharpen up your appetites for breakfast."

Frank Bestor laid aside his sword and belt, took off his cap and sat down; but he replied:

"You must pardon me, Don—"

"Captain Pierre, here, my dear Bestor."

"Ah, yes; well you will pardon me, I know, from drinking with you, or breakfasting, when I tell you I have not forgotten our last supper together on the yacht I now have the pleasure of commanding."

"Ah, yes; but why bring up unpleasant remembrances?"

"Because I desire to let you know that I am aware of your anxiety to get rid of one who well knows you, Captain Pierre."

"You do not suspect me of preparing to drug or poison you now?"

"I do not know what you might do; but it would be unwise on your part to attempt it, for should I remain on board over a certain time, there are those on board the Sea Shell who would come in her to see if harm had befallen me."

"Your African crew, or rather mine?"

"Were you on deck now, Captain Pierre, you would observe the uniform of American naval officers on the deck of the Sea Shell."

"By Heaven! you have betrayed me."

"Oh, no, hardly that when I come alone to your vessel; but I simply give you a hint that I did not come here to be murdered."

"You suspect me?"

"No, I know you."

"Well, why are you here?"

"I will tell you as shortly as I can."

"Pray do so."

"You sailed from home the very night I ran into the Bay St. Louis in the Sea Shell."

"You know this?"

"Oh, yes, as well as I know that you sailed to Vera Cruz, left your negro crew there and shipping another ran to this coast to carry back a cargo of blacks to sell to Señor Rafael Cambra."

"By Heaven! but you seem to be well-posted in my movements."

"I am, Captain Pierre, far better than you think."

"Why have you come here with American officers on your vessel?"

"Simply to protect myself and to bring you to terms."

"What terms?"

"Have you no curiosity to know just how I escaped the night you threw me overboard into Mobile Bay?"

"I confess that I have," sneered the pirate.

In a few words Frank Bestor told his story, and how he had discovered that an old friend was to be hanged for murder, and he determined to save him, so had taken the yacht of the Don for that purpose.

"I considered we were quits on the yacht, crew, and what I found on board, my dear Captain Pierre, after your attempt on my life; but I may as well tell you that I had another purpose in view also in cutting out the Sea Shell, which I knew you would believe had been driven out to sea in the hurricane and gone down with all on board."

"Well, what was your other purpose?" and the Don was growing restless.

"I must confess all, so will say that I had no idea of letting you make a pirate of that splendid boy, or kill him, and I plotted to have him escape, and thus find a vessel home after you had left this river."

"You did this?"

"Oh yes; but he was taken by the African guide to his people, the Mountain Lions, the same tribe to which the crew of the Sea Shell belong, and there he remained until I sought him out, for, as he had not returned home I was sure some harm had befallen him, so came to see."

"You are getting very good as you grow older."

"Don Juan Moro also has the reputation of being a very good man on the shore of the Bay St. Louis; but I fear it is not deserved."

"Go on with your story, sir."

"With more pleasure than you will enjoy in its recital, Captain Pierre."

"I am not the man to betray an old comrade, so I did not let Gordon Grayhurst know that Don Moro was Captain Pierre the Pirate and also Monsieur Belgrave."

"I spoke of having visited my old friend Don Moro, and learning that he had not gotten home determined to seek him."

"I knew that in your disguise of beard, long hair and accent as Don Moro, no one would recognize you as Pierre the Pirate, not even Gordon Grayhurst, and so I told him a wealthy Spaniard had bought and fitted up Castle Moro and was most friendly with his parents at Belle Eden."

"I did not wish to be known as a one-time pirate to his parents, so we agreed to say that I had visited Africa to look up some white captives, and had thus rescued him."

"And he does not know me as the pirate?"

"I said not, for I would not betray you as an old comrade."

"I was a fool for leaving there."

"Oh, no, you were wise, not knowing this fact."

"Pray go on."

"I accounted to Mrs. Grayhurst, whom you remember I met, for my possession of your yacht, by telling her I had, after being washed overboard, been picked up at sea, seen your vessel under her black crew drifting aimlessly, and thus had taken possession of her."

"And no one suspects me of being other than Don Juan Moro, a Spaniard?"

"Not a soul."

"I alone know you as you are," was the cool response of Frank Bestor.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A PIRATE'S PLEDGE.

"Do you really mean, Bestor, that I could return to Castle Moro, to-day, and not be known as other than Don Moro?" said the Don excitedly.

"I do."

"Not even the boy would report me?"

"No."

"Nor recognize me?"

"I think not; but that is a risk you must run."

"True, and yet there is little risk in it, for I certainly am changed."

"You are."

"I only wish I could believe you."

"Why can you not?"

"This may be a plot of yours to entrap me."

"No, for you are in my power now, did I wish it."

The pirate started in spite of himself.

"You mean your vessel and those on board could capture my schooner?"

"That is not all; but you certainly are at my mercy, for I would not be fool enough to come here, you may be assured, unless it was so, and more, I am here to make terms with you."

"Terms?"

"You must know that I am fully aware of all that you would do to further your ends."

"You may be."

"I am, and I know you would wish to rob me of life, and would do so, to cover up your tracks, that you might be known to no one as other than Don Juan Moro."

"But I have taken a fancy to live on the Gulf coast myself."

"You?"

"Yes, for it is a charming climate, the waters are just suited for enjoying life as a sailor, fruits of all kinds grow there, and I have a fancy to become a planter."

The Don looked worried.

This man who had been his lieutenant was proving to be his master.

"So you intend to live there?"

"Yes, and I already have some one looking out for a place for me."

"Of course I cannot expect to live in the splendor you do; but I shall live comfortably."

"Doubtless, and you can run your slaves over from Africa."

"I am not in the slave trade, my dear Don; but should my crew wish to take their wives and children with them, they can do so, and Trader Carmal will not get the purchase money for them either."

"You are a strange man, Bestor."

"I am what one might call a paradox—an honest pirate, Captain Pierre."

"But I wish to ask you about the death of Mr. Gaston Grayhurst."

"Well?"

"He fell in a duel?"
 "He did."
 "With one Shannon Vere?"
 "Yes."
 "Your tool?"
 "What?"
 "I say with your tool?"
 "I do not understand you."
 "Well, Shannon Vere had been born a gentleman.
 "But he sunk so low that no one would recognize him."

"He had gotten rid of his place and negroes by mortgaging them, and was with the dregs of humanity when suddenly he was taken to your bosom as a friend."

"He had a legacy left him, it was said, fitted his home up, redeemed his negroes, cut his old companions, and fought a duel with Planter Grayhurst, in which you were the second for both gentlemen."

"Now, knowing that you had settled on the Gulf shores to revenge yourself on Gaston Grayhurst for some secret reason, known only to yourself, and aware that you wished to appear as his friend, I saw in all this sudden reformation of Shannon Vere and his legacy, your clever hand."

"Others did not see it as I did; but I know you, Captain Pierre."

"You wrong me, there."

"Not in the least; but let me tell you why I came here to seek you."

"I should very much like to know."

"To tell you that you can return to Castle Moro and again live as the respected and admired Don."

"But you are to pledge me your word that you will take no act to avenge yourself again upon the Grayhursts for real or fancied wrongs."

"You almost wrecked the boy's life—you got your hireling to kill his father—"

"It is false."

"So you say, but I believe it to be true."

"Now your revenge must be satiated with what you have done."

"If you do not pledge this, then, so help me Heaven, you shall hang for your crimes, Pierre, the Pirate, and that before another night falls upon you!"

"You dare to threaten me?"

"Yes, for I know that I have the power to carry out all I say."

"Do not think that my schooner—"

"My schooner, you mean."

"Well, mine now, for I accept her as a present from you; but do not think she represents the force against you."

"Oh, no! There are forces ashore that have you hemmed in, and guns that can open on your vessel, while escape would be impossible."

"Now, all rests with me, for I have come to see if you are Pierre the Pirate."

"If I do not return, then you will be attacked."

"If I return and make my report that you are not, then you are free to go your way."

"You see I knew who I was dealing with, Don Moro, when I sailed in your wake."

"Curse you!"

"Don't say that, for remember how often I have saved your life, and more, remember that my friendship for an old comrade, one who served me well in the past, alone keeps me from being revengeful for the act against my life."

"I only wish I had killed you."

"I am glad that you did not, for other reasons than selfish ones."

"But to your promise."

"That I drop all feeling against the Grayhursts?"

"Yes."

"Why do you ask this?"

"Because they are my friends."

"And mine."

"Your friendship is death itself; but do you give the pledge?"

"You say that you have a land force that holds my vessel in?"

"Permit me to go on deck and signal, and you will see an answer from four quarters."

The pirate seemed convinced, and replied:

"Let me understand you."

"As to what?"

"I am to go free in my vessel?"

"Yes."

"With what cargo of slaves I choose to carry?"

"With that I have nothing to do, so long as you do not take any of the Mountain Lions tribe."

"And I am to return to Castle Moro, unsuspected as I was before your coming?"

"Yes."

"In return I am to pledge myself not to interfere with the Grayhursts?"

"In every particular, or to seek the slightest revenge upon them."

"Should one die?"

"I shall sift the manner of the death, and if traced to you, then look out."

"You appoint yourself, then, their secret guardian?"

"I do."

"I give the pledge."

"Captain Pierre, I know that, with all your wickedness, you revere the Bible, and you shall swear upon that."

"I have one here."

"Oh, yes, I know you do not sail without one, so get it."

The Bible was taken from its place in the locker, where it had as company a crucifix of gold and some sacred relics.

Then the pirate placed his hand upon the Bible, and repeated after Frank Bestor the oath he uttered.

The face of Pierre, the Pirate, paled the while, but his voice was firm and distinct.

"Now, Captain Pierre, I shall return, report having met you on my cruise, and that business called you to Spain, and you presented me with the Sea Shell."

"What do you expect to do with such a craft?"

"That is my affair, Captain Pierre; but you may be sure it will not be an elephant on my hands, nor be put to unlawful uses."

"Now, as I wish to pay Carmal, the trader, a visit, I will say good-morning, expecting to see you before many months at Castle Moro."

With this Frank Bestor arose, and as he reached the companionway, he turned and said:

"Do not allow a boat to leave your vessel until you see the Sea Shell set sail."

"And, by the way, as I see that your mate has been eavesdropping, and has heard all that has been said, having just risen from his seat near the open hatch, it would be well to see that he does you no harm by repeating what has been said."

"Thank you, I will see to that," and the pirate bowed as Frank Bestor left the cabin and returned to his boat.

CHAPTER XXV.

BROUGHT TO TERMS.

CARMAL had been anxiously watching affairs in the river.

He had seen the boat from the strange schooner visit the Shark, and then return, after which it had made a second visit.

The long stay of the visitor on board he had noted, for he saw that the strange vessel was floating the United States flag.

Then he saw the boat put off from the Shark and come toward his dock.

This alarmed him, as his glass revealed an officer in uniform.

Had Captain Pierre come in the boat he would have deemed it all right.

So Carmal got ready to receive a visitor that might prove a disagreeable one.

The trader was a shrewd man.

His fortune, as fast as made, he had transferred to England.

He kept always on hand a belt of gold, should he have to fly suddenly, and he had his guides ready to take him to an interior point, from where he could make his way to another part of the coast.

He had several slaves who had been trained to come to his rescue if needed.

These the trader called to have in readiness, and he buckled about him his belt of gold.

Then he was ready to receive his visitor.

Had a large force come ashore, Carmal the trader would not have been "at home," but off on a hunt in the interior.

As it was, he did not fear one officer, for he had no idea of the two men in the boat coming with him.

As the officer advanced toward the quarters of the trader, the latter muttered to himself:

"Yes, it is Captain Bestor; I was sure the schooner was here; but what brings him back here, for he is no slaver?"

"I don't like his coming at all; but I must put a bold face on the matter."

The bold face of the trader became very meek-like when he saw the stern look in the eyes of the outcast sailor.

"Well, Carmal, still here, I see!" said Frank Bestor, as he drew near.

"I am just arranging to depart now, captain."

"Yes, you have been for some years, just arranging; but I know you have gotten a cargo for Captain Pierre, and I wish to ask you if there are any of the Mountain Lions tribe among them?"

"No, senor."

"You are sure?"

"Not one."

"Well, I have sent to the corrals to see, and if there are you must give them up, for that tribe is under my especial protection, and I will not have one of them sent into slavery."

The trader made no reply, and after awhile Bestor said:

"I will wait here, Carmal, for the report of my men, sent to your two corrals, where I know you have had your slaves brought for Captain Pierre to take his pick from."

"But, Senor Captain, I—"

"It is all right, Carmal, and meanwhile I will breakfast with you, and feeling thus friendly toward you will state that word will be sent to American cruisers, immediately upon my return to the States, giving information that although

you have a trading-post here, you also have a slave mart, and furnish more cargoes of blacks for slavers than all the other traders on the coast.

"This will cause them to pounce down upon you, to confiscate your stores and hang you."

"You understand what I mean, Carmal?"

"That you will do this?"

"Yes, for you have made a vast fortune, and only hang on to get more."

"I give you this warning that you may get rid of your stores, send back slaves you cannot sell, and take yourself to a place of safety, for surely you will hang, as an American cruiser will make her rendezvous in this river, wholly unsuspected as being a trading retreat for slavers."

"My God! captain, you will ruin me!"

"Why, you told me long ago you were getting ready to go, and but now you said you were preparing to depart immediately."

"Now we will have breakfast, my dear Carmal, and by that time my men will be in with their reports."

Carmal was unhappy and weary, and though the breakfast was a tempting one, he did not enjoy it that morning.

At last he asked:

"Did you see Captain Pierre?"

"Oh, yes, I had a little matter to arrange with him."

"He is a hard man to deal with."

"I found him very docile indeed."

"That is strange."

"Not when you know that were I to signal from your window—see me, for instance—and you discover, as he did, that his vessel is hemmed in."

"See here!"

As he spoke, the sailor waved a red flag from the piazza of the hut, and instantl , across the river from two points, it was answered by the fluttering of crimson colors in the edge of the forest.

Stepping outside he waved a flag in another direction, and it was responded to in like manner from a hill above the trader's home and a point up the river.

"My God! you have us surrounded!" cried the trader.

"I did not come here blindfolded, or unprotected, Carmal, as Captain Pierre felt convinced."

"You are in league with a cruiser, who has supported you with her crew."

Frank Bestor smiled, and then said, as he saw two forms approaching:

"Here come two of my scouts."

One was a white man, in sailor garb, the other one of the blacks from the schooner Sea Shell."

"Well, Torbett, what news?" said Bestor, addressing the white man.

"The black can tell you, sir."

The African in his own tongue then reported finding in the corral seventeen men, six women and five children of the Mountain Lions tribe.

"Oh, Lord! I knew it not," exclaimed Carmal, in holy horror.

Other scouts now approached, each a white and black sailor, until six more had come to the house of the trader.

All had the same story to report, that, out of the blacks brought up for Captain Pierre to select from, they had found men, women and children of the Mountain Lions tribe.

"A hundred and ten in all, Carmal, where you said there were none."

"Send messengers at once and have those people brought here, and let your storekeeper get supplies, arms and clothing for them, as they are to start back to their village within two hours."

"But, captain, I have paid for them, and—"

"Do as I command you, or by Heaven I shall hang you within the hour."

"I am compelled to obey, so will go—"

"You will stay right here and issue your orders."

"Mind you, man, I am in deadly earnest, and if you trifle with me I swear to you that you shall never enjoy the fortune you have made."

The trader was alarmed and hastily issued his orders.

Within two hours the Mountain Lions captives were assembled there, stores were provided, with weapons and all that Bestor cared to order, and selecting three of the Sea Savages from his crew he called them aside and said:

"You are to take these people back to your village."

"You know the wives and children of your comrades now with me, so have them ready to come to the coast to sail with me to America, when a messenger comes to you from me."

The blacks bowed low, with their hands on their foreheads, and then the column took up its march, while Bestor said:

"Carmal, it will be easy for you to send a messenger to your Man-Hunters to attack this party."

"Should you do so, beware."

"There are spies on you that you little dream of, and I will be on this coast before very long again."

"Do you see that tree?"

"Yes."

"It will be your gallows if you are here when I return."

"Good-by, and a last one, for I feel sure we will not meet again."

With this Frank Bestor turned away, and, followed by his white and black sailors started on the path to the river.

He had gone but a short distance when he halted and said something to those with him.

They instantly departed in different directions leaving him alone.

Then he called out to the trader:

"Carmal, it would be best for you to remain in your quarters to-day, and keep your servants there."

"Should I see any one leave, the schooner will open fire on your house."

With this he retraced his way to his boat and was soon after on board of his vessel which remained quietly at anchor in the river.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WELL DONE.

UPON leaving Vera Cruz Frank Bestor had crowded on all sail in chase of the Shark.

He wished to overhaul her if possible, and if not, to arrive in advance of the fleet craft.

Out of the Gulf, into the broad Atlantic flew the swift Sea Shell, and then her course was shaped for the African shores.

When nearing the coast the Sea Shell, which had weathered many a blow, was caught in a severe tornado that caused her to lay to for a day or more.

The next morning a wreck had been sighted, and bearing down to it Bestor had discovered it to be an English brig bound to India.

The hull was leaking badly and there was nothing to do but to take off the captain and his crew, for the wreck could not have been kept up many hours longer and there was not a boat left on board, the tornado having swept all away.

All that could be saved from the wreck was stowed in the hold of the Sea Shell, and finding the captain a young man and a clever fellow, Bestor had told him that his vessel was bound upon a special cruise and that he needed his aid and that of his crew, for which all should be paid, and then landed safely in England.

The nature of the mission of the Sea Shell Bestor did not explain; but he hinted that a certain American craft was suspected of piracy, and if discovered to be a pirate, her commander would be taken back to the United States along with his craft and crew.

The skipper and crew of the wrecked brig were very glad to aid the man who had served them so well, and the schooner continued on to the African Coast, the Englishmen deeply impressed with the Sea Savages, who did their duty so well, were as silent as ghosts and never spoke to them.

It was after nightfall when the Sea Shell ran into the river, and sending out a boat ahead under Molok, it soon returned to report the Shark at anchor off the wharf of Carmal, the Trader.

Before dawn, Bestor had arranged his plans.

These were to send two English sailors, under the guidance of one of his Sea Savages, to certain points on the hills on each shore overlooking the anchorage of the Shark.

An African and an English sailor was then dispatched to search the corral, where Bestor knew the blacks would be brought for Pierre, the Pirate, to pick from.

These had instructions to see if in either corral there were any blacks from the tribe of the Mountain Lions, and they were to then report to their commander at the quarters of Carmal, the slave trader.

When the dawn broke, there was not a soul visible upon the Sea Shell's decks, and the reader has seen the dread with which her presence in the river was looked upon.

The captain of the brig was left in command of the schooner, with orders to get under way and attack the Shark, if Bestor did not return within a given time.

As he had the well-trained crew of blacks on board, to whom Bestor had explained all, and a dozen of his own men, he could make short work of the Shark at close quarters and boarding.

How successfully the plan of Frank Bestor was carried out the reader has seen, and that both Don Moro and Carmal the trader were led to believe that he had other support than appeared.

This, the presence of the white sailors aided him to carry out, and the brig's captain, in full uniform pacing the deck of the Sea Shell, at whose peak floated the Stars and Stripes, aided the deception.

Having gotten the pledge of Don Moro, to all he asked, and freed the captives from the tribe of Mountain Lions, Bestor was more than willing to depart from the river, though he gave no hint of immediately doing so.

That the Don was a prisoner for the day on his own vessel, and the trader in his own quarters, was certain, for they dared not disobey the order of the man who had so cleverly mastered them, not knowing what power he had behind them.

The Don thought that perhaps Frank Bestor

had, by some means, gotten in with the commander of an American vessel-of-war, and so he had remained quiescent, as though his hands had been tied.

When the dawn broke the next morning he gave a sigh of relief to find that the Sea Shell had disappeared as mysteriously during the night as she had come in under cover of the darkness the night before.

He at once sent a boat down the river to reconnoiter, and had then gone ashore in his gig to see what the visit of Frank Bestor to Carmal the trader had amounted to.

He found the trader in ill-humor, though he rejoiced to find the Sea Shell gone.

The trader ordered breakfast, and then the two sat down for a talk together.

"Well, Carmal, you had a visitor yesterday?" said the Don opening the conversation.

"The same as yourself, Captain Pierre."

"Mine was an unwelcome one."

"I was not glad to see the gentleman myself, captain."

"He simply warned me that he was in league with the commander of an American cruiser and wished to tell me that this must be my last run to this coast after blacks."

"And he told me if I was here when he came again he would hang me."

"Hang you?" said the pirate with a laugh.

"So he said, Captain Pierre, and then he took from me over a hundred of my best slaves."

"Why I thought he was not a slaver?"

"Nor is he; but these were of the Mountain Lions tribe, and all of them sound as a dollar."

"I expected to get a good price from you, Captain Pierre, for them, but they had to go."

Captain Pierre seemed pleased to feel that he had not been the only one who had been mastered by Frank Bestor.

"Well, Carmal, I am not anxious to remain a minute longer than necessary, so we will go to the corrals to-day and pick out my cargo, and I'll get to sea to-morrow night," said Captain Pierre.

The next day the Shark set sail from the coast of Africa with her living cargo on board.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SAVAGES TO THE RESCUE.

THE low-browed, evil-faced mate of the Shark was a born villain.

Captain Pierre had treated him well, had promised him a goodly share of the profits of the voyage, and he had not had a cross word with him on the run from Vera Cruz to Africa.

But Mate Mendez was a man to wish to have the upper hand in all things.

He had quickly realized that Captain Pierre was no man to trifle with, and he had taken pains to do nothing to anger him.

He felt confident that there was more in this cruise to Africa than appeared on the surface.

Pierre, the Pirate, had not been heard of upon the seas of late years.

Where was he, or what had he been doing meanwhile?

This the mate wished to know.

If the venture to Africa turned out a lucrative one, then the Shark would be the very vessel Mate Mendez would want.

The mate had done some buccaneering on his own hook before, in a small way, and he had ambition to become a noted sea rover.

With the Shark under his command, and a good crew, he could realize that ambition.

As the mate had shipped the crew, they were naturally friendly to him, and so the man meant to plot against his master.

He began his plot by deciding to know just what Frank Bestor came on board the Shark for.

The appearance of the Sea Shell in the river, a vessel the very counterpart of the Shark, startled him.

What he heard, as he seated himself at the raised hatch of the cabin, told him that his master had a master in Frank Bestor.

It led him to believe that the visitor was backed up in his coming by an American cruiser.

He heard all that passed, noted names carefully in his mind, and felt ready to spring upon Captain Pierre his secret, which would make him his slave, he thought.

Not the remotest idea had he that he had been detected by Frank Bestor.

When he saw the latter rise to depart, he had considered the interview ended, and had slipped away from the place he occupied fully satisfied with his eavesdropping undertaking.

When the Shark had left the land of Africa out of sight astern, and the sun was nearing the horizon on the day after the sailing, Captain Pierre came on deck.

He had been particularly kind to the mate, and yet he had watched his every look and move.

As he now came on deck there was a wicked look in his eyes.

Yet he smiled on Mate Mendez, and said:

"I have something to say to you, Senor Mendez."

The mate bowed and advanced.

"Call the crew aft please, for I want to have them hear all I say."

The mate at once had the crew come aft.

There was a large cargo of blacks on board, all in good health, young, and the very best kind to sell in the West Indies.

The captain certainly had something to say about the profits of the voyage; at least so thought Mate Mendez.

"Men," said Captain Pierre glanced over his crew, a hard-looking lot by the way, "I have a disagreeable duty to perform."

"You have heard of me as Pierre the Pirate, and though I have made a run to the African Coast as a slaver, the discipline on my vessel is the same as though I was buccaneering."

"The run has been made, and is thus far successful; but while at anchor in the river, one under my command did that which I will not permit to go unpunished."

"On board of this vessel I am king."

"My word is law, and your lives are in my hand."

"The man I refer to deliberately seated himself on my quarter-deck, where he could hear all that passed in my cabin, when the officer of this vessel's twin ship called upon me ten days ago."

"It is false!" yelled Mendez, now realizing that he was the object of the pirate chief's attention.

"Silence!"

The thunder tones of Captain Pierre showed that he was in deadly earnest, and Mendez turned livid.

"What that man," continued Captain Pierre, "overheard, I do not care to have made known, men, and so I shall silence his lips forever."

"He did that which I would not tolerate in one of my crew, and certainly I shall not in one of my officers, the one whom I placed second in command to myself."

"He is your friend, I know, and he has whispered it among you that he intended to have this vessel, and you were to aid him; but to show you how little I care for his plots and threats, I will now make you his executioners."

"Senor Carlos, detail eight men to shoot to death Mendez, the traitor, and you step into his shoes as first officer," and Captain Pierre turned to his second mate, a young man with a devil-in-care air who promptly responded:

"Yes, Senor Chief."

Mendez was now livid with fright and rage. The change from fancied success to sudden death facing him had been unexpected.

But he was not one to die without a struggle.

The men knew him, many were pledged to his leadership, and when they sided with him the others must follow.

What if they did have to face the redoubt Pierre, the Pirate, and as for Mate Carlos they need have no fear of him.

So he sprung toward the crew, and shouted:

"Men, I will lead here, and this cargo of live cattle shall be equally divided among all."

"Aid me to seize this schooner, deliver Pierre, the Pirate, up to the Governor-General of Cuba and get the reward offered by Spain for his head, and then turn this beautiful craft into a buccaneer."

"Come, men! down with Pierre, the Pirate!"

The men yelled assent to the bold leader, and it looked as though Pierre, the Pirate, was doomed.

Few men placed as he was, could have met that dread ordeal and not faltered.

But, he did not move, nor did his face change a muscle.

Only his eyes assumed a more devilish look.

As the mutineer saw that he had won the crew against Pierre, he started to lead them on, when suddenly, at a call from the buccaneer chief, out of the cabin poured a stream of black savages armed with long spears.

Mate Mendez and his backers were not only amazed, but startled, and they shrank back in confusion.

Captain Pierre smiled and checked the advance of his savages by a word in their own tongue.

"You see I knew you, Mendez, and your gang."

"As I speak the African lingo, the idea struck me to use these savages against you."

"I have half a mind to let them run you all through the body, and throw you into the sea, for I could work my craft back with these blacks."

"But, I will be merciful to you, men, though, Mendez, you must die."

"Men, get to your posts, and, Senor Carlos, my savages will execute this mutineer. To your posts, I say!" cried Pierre, "I'll set these savages upon you, you mutinous hounds!"

At the thunder tones of the chief the mutineers fairly ran to their posts, leaving Mendez alone.

He saw his danger, and, with cries for mercy, dropped upon his knees; but, at a word from the chief the blacks rushed upon him with their spears, lifted him in mid-air on their points, and threw him overboard into the sea.

The mutiny was quelled, and the score of blacks which he had brought from the hold to the cabin, to aid him, were allowed to remain on deck.

The Shark swept on, leaving the body of the

mutineer to sink beneath the waves, and Pierre the Pirate was master of his vessel, with no dread of further trouble.

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE TWO SHOTS.

THERE were many living about Belle Eden, who felt assured, after meeting Gordon Grayhurst, that he meant to call Shannon Vere to account for his father's death.

Though young, Gordon Grayhurst had the calm dignity of a man of the world.

He had passed through so much to make a man of him, and had always been a precocious child, so that his years were not considered in thinking of him.

He was of athletic form, strong beyond his years and had done a man's deeds.

To his mother and sister he was most affectionate, and his manners were most courtly to all.

There was something about the youth strangely fascinating, and no one met him that did not seem at once drawn toward him.

After the sailing of the Sea Shell he devoted himself to the care of the estate, and relieved his mother of the care of the slaves and plantation.

He made many improvements, and his master hand in management was soon seen upon everything.

Estelle was his constant companion.

She hunted with him, whether he went on foot or horseback, and followed the hounds in a deer or fox chase with a daring surpassed only by her brother.

She went fishing with him, and he soon taught her to sail his little ten-ton yacht with a skill that the coast fishermen were bound to acknowledge.

One day Gordon was out hunting alone.

He was riding leisurely along when suddenly a large deer dashed by at a distance of a hundred yards.

Instantly he threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired from his saddle.

The deer dropped at the crack of the rifle, and riding forward Gordon threw himself from his saddle and started toward his game.

But he stopped suddenly, for by the side of the deer stood a tall form.

The stranger was in hunter's costume, and carried a rifle across his arm.

"Pardon me, sir, but may I ask if you intend to claim my game?" asked Gordon, as he saw that the stranger had his hunting-knife in hand as though about to run it across the throat of the dead buck.

"Pardon me, sir, but I shot this deer," was the reply.

"You are mistaken, sir, for I brought him down an instant ago, as he dashed by me; but I am not one to quarrel over game, and as you seem to desire it you can have it."

"I care not for it, sir, not more than for the sport of the chase, so you can have the game with my compliments."

"May I ask your name, sir?" said Gordon, nettled by the manner of the man.

"Shannon Vere—and yours?"

"I am the son of the man you killed in a duel, Mr. Vere," was the calm reply, but the youth paled with inward emotion.

"As I have had several affairs of honor, fatal to my adversaries, may I ask the name of the gentleman to whom you refer?"

The words were uttered with a coolness that was remarkable, and the eyes of Shannon Vere met those of the son of the man he had slain without flinching.

He had suspected, at Gordon's remark, who he was; but he had not expected to find the youth so much of a man.

"My name is Gordon Grayhurst, Mr. Shannon Vere."

"Ah! permit me to congratulate you, sir, upon your safe return home after most miraculous escapes, as I have heard."

"Thank you, sir; but permit me again to present you with the game I killed."

"Mr. Grayhurst, let me ask you where you aimed, when you fired upon this deer?"

"Behind the left shoulder, sir, for the heart."

"There is your bullet-wound, sir, and it has pierced the heart."

"Yes, I see it," and Gordon noted the wound pointed out to him by Shannon Vere.

"Now, sir, I aimed at the head, just back of the ear, for it is safest, as your game never runs after receiving a shot there."

He turned the head of the deer as he spoke, and there was a bullet-wound in the spot indicated.

"We must have fired at the same instant, sir."

"So it seems, Mr. Grayhurst, but as these lands belong to your estate, I yield and withdraw."

"Permit me, being upon my own lands, to ask your acceptance of the deer."

"Pardon me, no," and raising his hat Shannon Vere turned to depart, when Gordon said:

"One moment, Mr. Vere?"

"Certainly, sir."

"I wish to say to you that just now, and for an indefinite time, I am under a certain pledge

not to take steps toward avenging my father's death at your hands.

"As I have been informed in the matter, my father was driven into the duel by you, and I therefore shall, some day, hold you to account for his death, though now I cannot do so, as I said, from reasons that hold me in check, and which I cannot explain."

"As you please, Mr. Grayhurst, and I am glad you do not wish now to hold me to account, as I also am under a pledge not to meet any one."

"At some other time, when free to accept, I shall be wholly at your service, as you seem to wish to press the affair to a vendetta."

"Had my father been in the wrong, sir, I would have let it rest; but as it is, he must be avenged."

"Good-morning, Mr. Vere."

Shannon Vere again raised his hat and turned away, and throwing the deer behind his saddle, Gordon Grayhurst mounted his horse and rode homeward.

But he spoke to no one of his meeting in the woodland with the slayer of his father.

He was under a pledge to Frank Bestor, and he could not break it.

He had, however, met the man who had killed his father, and he had found him willing to meet him, fearless, cynical, and ready to try conclusions with the son.

Some day they would meet, and toward that day Gordon Grayhurst looked forward with revengeful feelings.

Upon his return home the youth found his mother deep in the perusal of letters received from England.

"Gordon, my son, I am glad you have come, for there are letters here which interest you.

"They are from our English attorney."

Mrs. Grayhurst was fearful that a meeting would come about between her son and Shannon Vere.

She had had reason to dread such an event, from the sad experience of the past, so she was anxious to get Gordon out of the way.

To do this she urged that he should sail for England and personally look after affairs there.

Then, too, her mother's heart wanted to see her son hold the title and estates of his forefathers.

His going to England and seeing Grayhurst Castle and all that the place was, and the title implied, she hoped would cause him to desire to become Lord Gordon Grayhurst in earnest.

Should he do so, then she would go there to dwell, and that would remove Gordon from the presence of Shannon Vere.

So it was that Mrs. Grayhurst urged her son to at once sail for England.

"Do you not think I had better await the return of Captain Bestor, mother?" asked Gordon, who, realizing that he should go to England, preferred to first see Frank Bestor.

"His stay is so indefinite, Gordon, and he may not return for a long while."

"I notice in the New Orleans paper that came to-day, a fine, new brig sails for London in a week loaded with cotton, and she will carry several passengers, and is well fitted up for their accommodation.

"Why not at once write over and engage passage on her, as the packet will not sail for a month?"

"I will if you urge it, mother, and, as my business will not, I hope, detain me long, I shall book returning in the brig if she comes back quickly, for I do not care to be longer away from you and Estelle than absolutely necessary."

"You will not think then of remaining in England, or at least returning there to assume your rights?"

"Mother, it will be time enough to do that when I come of age! but now I will prefer to arrange all to remain in my agent's hands and await my majority."

"I know nothing of England, and I am an American, happy to be under the government of a republic."

"Father seemed to prefer America to England, and he lived in both lands, and you, too, I have often heard say, loved this country and our home here."

"I will not urge, Gordon, but when you have seen for yourself, you will be the better able to judge."

"But you will go by the brig?"

"Yes, mother, and will write at once for a state-room, and in a few days will run over in my little yacht Estelle to the city."

Thus it was arranged, and though sad at the thought of parting with her son, Mrs. Grayhurst at least felt that for the present he was out of the way of a hostile meeting with Shannon Vere.

Four days after Gordon bade his mother and sister farewell, and the Estelle sailed for New Orleans, managed by a negro crew from Belle Eden.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FOE AT SEA.

THE Estelle landed her master upon the lake shore, from whence he took a vehicle to the city, where he put up at a hotel.

His first act then was to go down to the brig and see if a state-room had been engaged for him, as he had written to have done.

He found the brig alongside of the wharf loading with cotton, and she was a new, trim-looking vessel, small, but with the look of a good sea-boat and a fleet sailor.

Her cabin was almost gorgeously fitted up, and Gordon had his choice of state-rooms, as there had been no one else to apply for passage.

He had brought his valet with him from Belle Eden, Trust, a negro true as steel, and who had been his father's body-servant for years, and was as brave as a lion, wholly devoted to his young master as he had been to his old one.

The captain of the brig was a young man.

He had been a wild lad, and ran off to sea to return as mate of a vessel, and find his parents dead, with a snug sum laid aside for him.

He had invested it in the building of the Scorpion, and had spared no expense in fitting her up.

His desire was to carry over a cargo of cotton to London, there load for some other land, and thus navigate the globe.

He had engaged a small crew, but they were picked men, he had an excellent cook, a cabin-boy, and his two mates, both young men understood their business.

This much he informed Gordon of, and added:

"I am a good liver, Mr. Grayhurst, so we will not fare badly on the run over, as the brig will be supplied with all that is necessary."

Gordon liked the young captain, Rupert Gray, and his sailor's eye told him that he was to sail in a fine craft and with good officers and crew.

Several days passed and then the brig set sail with a full cargo.

Upon reaching the Gulf, the vessel's sails and rigging being new, at first all did not work smoothly; but it was not long before the craft began to show her mettle, and by the time she had entered the Atlantic and dropped the coast of Florida out of sight astern, the Scorpion was in perfect trim and rapidly logging the knots as she sped on her course to London.

One night the Scorpion ran into a calm.

Of course all fair breezes could not be expected, and as Gordon Grayhurst had found his state-room most comfortable, the cabin large and roomy, and the fare excellent, not to speak of pleasant companions in the captain and his two mates, he was content, and could put up with some delays.

The brig carried twelve men in crew, a cook, cabin-boy and three officers, seventeen all told, while Gordon and Trust, his servant, added two more to the number.

Having built his vessel for speed, Captain Gray had no fear of pirates, for he was confident that he could outwit any enemy that might cross his path at sea.

For protection, however, he had a couple of brass twelve-pounders, so mounted that they could be used fore, aft and as broadside guns, for the bulwarks were pieced with three ports to a broadside.

Then there were a score of muskets, twice as many pistols, and a double amount of cutlasses, so that the young captain considered his vessel armed against emergencies, should any occur.

On the night in question the calm was so deep that a fog settled upon the waters, and hung over the sea like a pall.

Thus the night passed; but, with the coming of dawn a faint breeze filled the sails, and the Scorpion moved slowly along through the fog.

As the dawn brightened the wind increased, the mist rose, and the mate of the brig, who held the deck, suddenly aroused all with:

"Ready about! all hands to set sail!"

The stern and ringing command brought every one on deck, even to Gordon and Trust.

There, not a mile away, coming straight toward them, was a schooner under a cloud of canvas.

She was bowing along at a ten-knot pace, for she had a stiff breeze.

The brig wore around as though on a pivot, and in an instant almost, her well-trained crew had her covered with canvas, for there was not a man on board that liked the looks of the strange vessel.

They knew they were in a dangerous neighborhood, as in those days the coast of the Carolinas, Florida and the West Indian waters were the haunts of innumerable lawless cruisers.

The brig had not been sighted from the schooner as soon as the latter had been seen, it was very evident; but when the brig went about a sudden commotion was visible on board the stranger.

The brig went dashing away in flight, and yet had not been long on her course before a plume of smoke came over the bows of the schooner, and a shot flew above her decks.

But Captain Gray simply conned the sailing of his vessel, showing no intention of obeying the summary command to come to.

Gordon Grayhurst stood watching the pursuer through his glass and said:

"Captain, did you notice that yonder fellow carries a black flag?"

The young captain of the brig seized the glass and turned it upon the schooner.

"A pirate, by Neptune! but we are in for it if she cripples us."

"Otherwise we can drop him."

Gordon Grayhurst said nothing, but gazed more closely at the schooner.

At last he said in an earnest tone:

"Captain Gray, I have been examining yonder vessel closely, and I know her, or her sister ship."

"If it is either vessel, I think we have nothing to fear; but I do not understand why either should hoist the black flag."

"Perhaps one of the vessels you refer to has been taken by a pirate, Mr. Grayhurst," suggested the captain.

"True, I had not thought of that."

"Well, we will show him a clean pair of heels, whoever he may be."

"Do you observe that he is gaining upon you, sir?"

"By Jupiter, no!"

"It is true."

"Take the glass and look."

The young captain eagerly seized the glass.

A short glance through it proved to him that Gordon Grayhurst was right, and he cried excitedly:

"Ho, lads, something ails the Scorpion, for yonder craft is gaining upon us."

All that could be done to add to the brig's speed was at once done; but the fact was soon apparent to all that the Scorpion was being cutfooted by the pursuer.

The men, too, saw the black flag at the peak of the schooner, and a glance over the decks revealed a number of black and white faces crowded together.

"She's a pirate, Mr. Grayhurst, and they outnumber us three to one, while she appears to have a heavy battery, and certainly is gaining upon us; but for all that, we must fight her, for pirates show no mercy."

"Yes, we must fight her to the bitter end!" responded Gordon Grayhurst, and then, after a long look at the pursuer, he said to himself:

"That is certainly the Sea Shell; but can Bestor have gone back to piracy after all?"

"If not the Sea Shell, it is the craft I have heard of as her sister ship, the Shark."

"But, can Don Moro have turned his vessel into a buccaneer?"

"I confess that I am sadly at a loss to know what to think."

As he uttered the last word, a puff came from the bows of the schooner, and a well-aimed shot tore along the decks of the Scorpion, killing one man and wounding several slightly with splinters.

There was no doubt in the minds of all on board the brig but that the schooner's commander was in deadly earnest, and there was but one thing to do, fight it out or haul down their flag.

CHAPTER XXX.

STRANGELY MET.

THE two guns on board the brig were run aft and loaded with solid shot, and as the schooner fired again, they answered together.

The pirate seemed a trifle surprised at this, for he had seemed to expect finding an unarmed craft.

And then both shots from the brig, one aimed by Gordon Grayhurst, the other by the captain, hit the schooner fairly, and it could be seen had done some damage.

The pirate promptly fired again, and with good effect, and at once an artillery duel was begun while flying over the seas.

The pivot gun on the bows of the schooner was of large caliber, and its shots told on the brig; but the two guns on the brig were well aimed, and it could be seen that the pirate was suffering in his crew if not in damage to his vessel.

So the fight went on, the schooner now under a perfect cloud of canvas, and gaining rapidly, while the fleet brig, though under all the sail she could spread, was, to the surprise of her captain and crew, found to be no match for her pursuer in speed.

She sailed well, but the schooner was the fastest.

But the disappointment of the young captain at finding a vessel to outsail his beautiful brig was lost in the dread of the deadly ordeal before him.

He could now see that the schooner had but three guns.

Then he could observe her crew, and there did not appear to be over half a hundred, blacks and whites, on board.

If at close quarters he might be able to beat her off, and he would try.

Closely had Gordon Grayhurst been scanning her through his glass, between his sighting the guns, and he was looking to see if he recognized the tall form of Frank Bestor on board.

This he did not do.

Nowhere was his friend's well-known form visible.

But instead, upon the quarter-deck, stood a tall man in uniform, and his face was covered by a long dark beard.

He certainly was chief, for he directed every movement of his vessel.

At last, as he was an eighth of a mile away he luffed sharply and the pivot guns of the schooner sent a heavy fire crashing into the brig.

The fire was a disastrous one, for it swept the decks of the brig, cutting down her captain at his post and several of his men.

The fire was promptly returned from the Scorpion, and a second broadside from the schooner did still more damage to life.

The combat was an unequal one; but Gordon Grayhurst kept it up, for the men looked to him now as their commander.

He fought his guns hotly, and was as cool as though firing a salute.

But it was all to no purpose, as his crew were half of them dead upon the decks, and nearly every man of the remainder was wounded.

Still, strange to say, though he had recklessly exposed himself, the daring youth had not been harmed by shot or splinter.

Another moment and the schooner came bearing down to board, and the command of the chief was heard:

"Boarders away!"

To resist the pirates, with his handful of men, Gordon Grayhurst knew was madness, for it would end in the utter annihilation of all.

He felt that he had no right to further sacrifice life.

If the pirates killed them afterward then that was not his fault, and he therefore decided to at once surrender.

As the schooner drew near he gave the order to run the brig up into the wind and lay to, while he stepped to the halyards and hauled down the Stars and Stripes.

As he did so Trust, his faithful servant, said dolefully:

"It's all up with us, massa."

"I hope not, Trust," was the reply, and as he uttered the words the schooner glided alongside the brig.

Grapnels were thrown and springing upon the bulwarks the pirate chief waved his men back, while he called out:

"Do you surrender, or is this a trap?"

"I surrender the brig, as her captain is dead and I am in command, though a passenger."

The pirate chief looked attentively at the youth, and then sprung on board the brig.

As he did so Trust almost shrieked out:

"Oh, Lord. Massa Gordon! it am Don Juan Moro that is the pirate!"

"Don Moro!" and Gordon's face showed his amazement.

The pirate started at the words of the negro, and his face became livid.

He had felt that the face of the youth was familiar; yet had not looked for him there on the sea.

Then it had been some time since he had seen the youth, not since he had left his vessel in Africa, not to return.

Now he recognized the negro, Trust, and he knew that Gordon Grayhurst was before him, again in his power.

But he said in a stern voice:

"Senor Carlos, secure these prisoners!"

Senor Carlos and his men were only too ready, and in a minute of time Gordon Grayhurst and the men were in irons and carried below to the seamen's quarters of the schooner.

"What shall I do with the wounded, sir?" asked Carlos.

"Toss them into the sea," was the cruel order.

The order was promptly obeyed.

"And the brig, sir?"

"She is a trim craft, new and a good sailor."

"I will examine her papers, have a look at her cabin, and overhaul her cargo."

"She would pay us well to run her to the Indies and sell her, I think, for it is only a few days' voyage," and Captain Pierre entered the cabin of the brig.

It was evident that he was both worried and pleased.

He had hated to be recognized by Trust, as Don Juan Moro, and having become known as such, there was but one thing for him to do, and what that was will appear further on.

The papers of the brig showed just what she was, the sole property of the dead captain, and also that her cargo had been bought and paid for by her owner.

The interior of the brig pleased the pirate greatly, and he found in the private desk of Captain Gray all the fortune in money which the young sailor had left, and which amounted to several thousands of dollars.

Then the state-room of Gordon Grayhurst was overhauled, and Captain Pierre's eyes glittered as he looked over the youth's papers there, and saw just what was carrying him to England.

A belt of gold was also found among Gordon's belongings, and this was coolly appropriated by the outlaw, who felt that his capture had not been a bootless one.

"The brig will bring a good price in Havana, and I can capture a couple of luggers and run her cotton into New Orleans where it will bring a fair sum."

"No, this is by no means a bad prize, for I

would give my schooner and all on board of it, for the boy alone."

"Luck certainly favors me on this cruise, and I cannot see how any one can suspect Don Juan Moro of foul play upon his return to his home on the Gulf."

The search of his prize having been concluded, Captain Pierre went again on deck.

He found his efficient first lieutenant, Carlos, who had stepped into Mate Mendez's dead shoes, and had carried out his orders thoroughly.

He had tossed the wounded prisoners into the sea, cleared the brig's decks, and reported the damage done to her as very slight, and already being repaired by the crew of the schooner.

The latter had suffered little by the fire of the brig, though her crew had been badly cut up.

For that Captain Pierre did not care, as he philosophically decided that there would be less men to pay off when he ended his cruise.

Then he had been most economical in the way of saving his blacks.

He had wished to make a good showing of numbers, so had brought a number of savages on deck.

Those, however, had been for show, not fighting purposes, as those he had trained during the voyage, the same who had so ably supported him in his trouble with Mendez, had been kept in his cabin ready to be called on deck if needed.

The blacks who were used to show and not fight, but to stand the fire of the brig through, were the sick ones of the human cargo.

Some of them he expected would die anyhow, and if killed a little sooner by the brig's fire, it made no difference.

Some dozen of these unfortunates, women as well as men, had thus been shot down upon the decks, and they were coolly rolled overboard by the schooner's crew.

Anxious to save every black he could, for they were valuable, Captain Pierre sent one-third of his cargo on board the brig, which gave far more room for those left on the schooner.

He took occasion of the capture of the prize, to thoroughly cleanse his vessel, and after a day and night laying to, side by side, the two vessels started on the run to Cuba. Senor Carlos having been placed in command of the Scorpion, with orders not to lose sight of the schooner in fair weather or foul.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DESERTED.

THE pirate chief was one to trust no man. He knew himself thoroughly, but believed all other men were untrustworthy, and for this reason kept a close watch on the brig.

He had figured up Senor Carlos's profits, and was aware that the blacks he had on board, and the brig would make that young officer quite a rich man.

So Captain Pierre was sleepless and kept a closer watch upon the brig than he did upon his own vessel or the weather.

He knew that the schooner was the fleetest of the two vessels; but for all that he did not wish her to get far enough away to have a good start, well knowing that a stern chase is always a long one.

If Senor Carlos had any idea of giving Captain Pierre the dodge, he was so closely watched he had not the slightest chance to do so.

By night Captain Pierre took the deck himself, and he never left it until sunrise.

In the daytime, although he told his mate to call him at the slightest movement of the brig that looked suspicious, he yet had secretly told two of the Africans to slip in and call him if they saw any strange act on the part of the Scorpion.

Even in a blow the chief never allowed the brig to get more than a safe distance away from him.

At last the Bahamas were sighted, and one night the schooner ran in under the lee of a large island, at least one larger than others she had passed.

The anchor was let fall, and the brig came in and came to an anchorage under the stern of the pirate craft.

Then the chief hailed for Senor Carlos to come on board.

The young officer soon after put in an appearance in the cabin of the schooner, and Captain Pierre said:

"Carlos, I wish to transfer the blacks on your brig again to the schooner, and then you are to set sail for an anchorage at the other end of this island."

"There you are to await my coming on board."

"Can I trust you?"

"With your life, Senor Chief."

"Well, get all the blacks on board at once, and I will send to the brig the twenty Africans whom I have trained as sailors, and they will work your vessel, for all your white seamen, except one to serve as your mate, I need with me."

"Yes, chief."

"Do this at once."

The boats were lowered, and the black captives who had been put on board the brig were transferred to the schooner once more, and the white crew on the prize also.

The black seamen whom it had been the especial care of Captain Pierre to train, were sent on board the brig and they had their orders given them in their own tongue before they departed.

This completely prevented Carlos, if treacherous, from running off with the brig.

He could not speak a word of the African tongue, and his savage crew could not understand him, so with his mate he was at their mercy, and to have escaped with the Scorpion was impossible.

If he understood the clever act of the chief, he kept it to himself.

Captain Pierre then gave orders to Senor Carlos where to run, telling him it was not over two miles distant, and there to drop anchor and await his pleasure.

The brig got under way, setting only sail enough to carry her to the anchorage indicated, and watching her with his night-glass, Captain Pierre saw her run into the cove and drop anchor where he had told Senor Carlos to remain until he heard from him, or received a signal.

In all this maneuvering of the pirate chief there was certainly something underhand going on.

It looked as though he was plotting something he did not wish his crew to see through.

At midnight, when the watch was changed, Captain Pierre came on deck.

Then he sent below to have Gordon Grayhurst, Trust, and the seven other prisoners brought on deck.

This was done, and as they were ranged in a line, all in irons, Captain Pierre said:

"I wish to see you, sir, in my cabin."

Gordon was the one he addressed, and silently he followed the chief, his chains clanking at every step.

"Sit there!"

Gordon Grayhurst silently obeyed.

"Your servant recognized me as Don Juan Moro, so the recognition seals your fate and his."

"But for that I was to return to my home, and meeting you, you would never have known me as the Monsieur Belgarde whose life you saved, and afterward as Captain Pierre the Pirate."

"Knowing me now as you do, you must take the consequences."

"And those consequences?"

"You soon will know."

"What reason have you for visiting your hatred upon me and mine?" asked Gordon Grayhurst.

"That is my secret, and you can never know it."

"I intended to get rid of you once before; but you foiled me."

"There shall be no mistake this time."

"Now, come with me on deck, and I will take you ashore."

"Ashore?"

"Yes, I know this island well, and it is to be your home."

"So be it, I accept my fate, for one can die but once."

"You are a plucky fellow, and, as I owe you my life, I am only sorry I cannot be merciful to you, but I cannot."

"Come!"

"If you intend to kill me, will you not let me write a letter to my mother?"

"Oh, no, for that would be to betray myself."

"You see, I am not known to be aware of your death."

"You understand?"

"Yes, you infamous brute, I understand you thoroughly."

As Gordon spoke, he arose and followed the chief from the cabin.

A boat ordered was already alongside, and in it were two black oarsmen.

The prisoners were sent over the side into the boat, and Captain Pierre followed, remarking to his mate:

"I forgot to send them on board the brig when she was here, so I will take them there myself."

The chief gave the order in the African tongue, and the two blacks, who were among those he had trained, gave way and urged the boat through the water.

The chief held the tiller and headed along the shore for the distant cove where the brig lay.

When out of sight of the schooner, and yet not in view of the brig, he headed inshore and soon made a landing.

"You and your slave come first, sir!" he said to Gordon Grayhurst.

Resistance was useless, with all heavily ironed as they were, both hands and feet, and slowly the youth got out of the boat.

Trust followed, and as he moved up to where his master stood, the pirate shoved the boat off and sprung back to his seat in the stern-sheets.

"Good-by, Master Gordon Grayhurst, for let me tell you that I have you and your slave where you will surely die, unless you can live on sand and salt water."

"With your irons on you can never reach the main island, for where you now are is but a rock, as you will see when the day dawns."

"Good-by."

The mocking voice reached the ears of Gordon Grayhurst, and told him how he had been tricked.

Brave as he was he reeled under the shock, and sinking down upon his knees he groaned in anguish of spirit, while poor Trust gave way to his grief in pathetic cries that would have melted a heart of stone.

The ironed prisoners in the boat moved uneasily and muttered deep imprecations.

But Captain Pierre held a pistol in one hand, a cutlass in the other, and said:

"It will be wise for you to keep quiet, men, if you do not wish a like fate."

The two blacks pulled on with strong strokes, silent and unmoved.

What the chief did with white men was nothing to them, and more, they could not understand what bad been done.

The brig soon loomed up in the darkness, and as she did so one of the prisoners cried:

"The boat is filling with water!"

It was true. The cruel pirate had removed the plug from the bottom of the boat and she was already half full of water.

Ballasted with heavy, solid shot, once the boat filled she would go to the bottom.

This was just what Captain Pierre meant should occur.

The moment that he saw the prisoners wildly excited, he spoke quickly to the blacks in their own tongue.

The prisoners believed that the chief had ordered them to bale the boat out, for with irons upon wrists and bands they were powerless to do anything.

But instead the two blacks dropped their oars and sprung into the sea, just as Captain Pierre shouted:

"Ho, the Scorpion ahoy!

"Send a boat, for we are sinking!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came back responsive in the voice of Carlos.

But Captain Pierre had calculated well.

He had baited for a purpose.

It was part of his plot, and as he did so he too sprung into the sea.

He knew that no human aid could reach those poor prisoners in irons.

The boat was already sunk to her gunwales, and a moment more would go under, the cannon-shot ballast carrying her to the bottom.

Wild cries arose from the drowned prisoners, to be a moment after smothered by the waters as the boat sunk beneath them.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LED BY DESTINY.

SEÑOR CARLOS was pacing the brig's deck when he heard the sudden hail ring out in the darkness, coming out of the waters it seemed to him.

His quick ear had caught a sound something like the sound of oars; but on that lone, desolate island coast he thought he must be mistaken.

His thoughts were on the voyage, its anticipated results, and the chief.

He saw that the latter doubted him.

That did not surprise him.

Those were days when man's inhumanity to man was openly perpetrated, whereas nowadays though the inhumanity exists it is not so generally shown.

He could not blame the chief for doubting him, for he had no confidence in the chief.

Senor Carlos was the unworthy scion of a worthy race; but he had gone to the bad, and his sole aim in life was to get money to satiate his luxurious tastes with.

He would endure any hardship, risk any danger to get gold.

He had been found by Captain Pierre and shipped in Vera Cruz as a second mate.

He had been promoted through the mutinous conduct of Mendez, and hence got larger pay.

Then he was to receive an interest in the results of the voyage.

This would all bring him in a snug sum of several thousand dollars, added to which would be his share in the brig as a prize.

But if he could have made a big strike by getting away with the brig when her cargo of blacks was on board, he would have had a fortune, he well knew.

It was as easy for him to sell the blacks as for Captain Pierre to do so, and then, if he wanted the brig for a piratical cruise, she was ready at hand.

With such thoughts he could not blame Captain Pierre for doubting him.

Had the chief not removed his cargo of blacks, Senor Carlos would have dodged him that night he was sent to another anchorage.

Even had he not taken his crew, and replaced them with the savages, he would have taken the brig, for she would have been useful, her cargo could have been sold for a good price, and then to have shipped a crew and become a buccaneer would have been the next step.

But the Don was a man of great foresight, and he had cleverly thwarted his lieutenant, as has been seen.

Regretting his ill-fortune, the Senor Carlos had been startled by the cry upon the waters.

The crew heard it also, and the motions of the lieutenant told them to lower away a boat, for they could not understand a word he said to them.

Again from the waters came a hail:

"Ilo, Carlos! my boat has sunk and we are drowning."

"Send a boat with all haste!"

Then there were more words, unintelligible to the lieutenant, but which the Savages understood, and they bent to their oars with a will.

Away went the boat in the gloom, and soon after it returned alongside and Captain Pierre sprang on deck.

He did not show that the exertion of swimming had disturbed him in the least; and the two blacks with him certainly had thought nothing of their sudden bath.

"Well, Carlos, I forgot to put those prisoners on board your vessel, so concluded to bring them, and the accursed devils attacked me and my two blacks, and we had to leap into the sea, as the boat in the scramble filled with water."

"The boat went down and the fellows being in irons went down with her, for you know I had her ballasted with shot for sailing on the river in Africa."

"Yes, sir, and the prisoners sunk?"

"All of them went down, their own act bringing on their own death, where they had hoped to kill me and my blacks and escape in the boat."

Appearances seemed to carry out the story of Captain Pierre, and had such not been the case why should Senor Carlos doubt the story?

Certainly he, nor any one else, could see any motive for his taking such means to get rid of the prisoners.

"It is too bad, sir; but will I send you back in another boat?"

"No, for upon the whole I think it best to run down with the brig to where the schooner is, and we will set sail, as I do not care, upon second thought to be seen in this neighborhood by any cruisers that might be in these waters."

"Shall I get up the anchor, sir?"

"Yes, and set sail, and we'll put to sea as soon as I return on board the schooner."

The brig soon ran back to within hailing distance of the schooner, and Pierre the Pirate went on board, after which both vessels stood out to sea, the chief with his secret locked in his breast as to what he had done with Gordon Grayhurst and his faithful servant, for that the two oarsmen knew it he counted as nothing.

When the dawn broke the brig and schooner were sailing along abreast of each other hardly a cable's length apart, and holding their respective distance though the Shark's not raising her topsails and flying jib set, which equalized their speed, for the Scorpion had up all her light canvas.

The island was leagues astern, with its dark secret, and the course of the vessel lay for a point where Captain Pierre knew that he could overhaul a Cuban coaster to carry in word to Rafael Cambras to meet him at a certain rendezvous on the coast, for he knew that the Vera Cruz merchant would be awaiting him at Havana, and expecting to hear from him.

A coaster was overhauled, the Shark flying the American flag, and the skipper was paid liberally to take a letter in cipher to the Senor Cambras's address in Havana.

Then the chief sailed for the secret rendezvous where he was to land his cargo of slaves.

Several days after the arrival of the two vessels in the lagoon, a most secure bidding-place, a lugger ran in and on board of her was the Senor Rafael Cambras the Vera Cruz merchant, thoroughly disguised so as no one of the pirate crew would recognize him if they saw him again.

There were slave dealers to buy the cargo, and Captain Pierre sold out at a good price every black, not keeping those he had trained as seamen, as he had given them reason to believe.

One of the traders also paid a liberal price for the brig and her cargo and transferring the prize to her new owner, Captain Pierre paid off his men, giving them the full share agreed upon, with a bonus that pleased them, and taking good care to let them know that he had accepted his pay in drafts on Havana and the United States, and not in gold, so that there would be no reason for them to mutiny and rob him, as he expected they would do, but for this precaution.

With the crew of the schooner he then set sail for Vera Cruz, Senor Cambras being his guest, and dropping anchor in the harbor at night, he sent Senor Carlos and every man ashore.

Two hours after Senor Cambras, who had landed the moment the Shark had dropped anchor, came off with the negro crew of the vessel, who had been kept on a ranch he owned near the town, while the voyage to the African Coast had been made.

And, poor innocent souls, they believed the story their master had told them, that he had loaned his schooner to the Mexican Government, during the time she had been on her lawless cruise, and they returned to the Shark happy at again going home, though they had

been well treated on the ranch of Senor Cambras.

Before dawn broke Captain Pierre had said farewell to Senor Cambras, the anchor was gotten up, and the Shark, once more masquerading as an armed American yacht, set sail for Havana to undergo a thorough overhauling before returning to her anchorage off Castle Moro.

One month after, bright as a new dollar, with new canvas and paint, the beautiful vessel dropped anchor in the cove of Castle Moro, and the grand old home was thrown open to welcome home its master.

But the Sea Shell was ahead of her, having reached her anchorage off Belle Eden some weeks before the return of Don Juan Moro in the Shark.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BACK TO BELLE EDEN.

GORDON GRAYHURST had not been gone very long from Belle Eden, when one morning Mrs. Grayhurst's sable maid, who came in to waken her, told her that a yacht was anchored off the plantation, and added:

"It's either the vessel of Captain Bestor, missy, or the Don's."

Mrs. Grayhurst hastened to make her toilet, and upon going out upon the piazza, found Estelle already there.

"Oh, mammal! Captain Bestor has returned, and I sent Dan to signal to him to come ashore to breakfast, and he is answering now."

She raised her glass to her eye as she spoke, and cried, cheerily:

"See, mamma, he says he will come."

"I am glad you were thoughtful enough to ask him, my child, for I would have sent out a boat and requested him to breakfast with us, for I should not have thought of signaling, and besides, do not know the signals a+ you do," and turning to the old negro butler who stood near, Mrs. Grayhurst continued: "You hear what Miss Estelle says, Luke. Captain Bestor will breakfast with us."

"Yes, missus," and Luke disappeared to see that all was in readiness to welcome a guest.

The mother and daughter attentively watched the beautiful vessel, the former remarking:

"She seems to have been on a long voyage, Estelle."

"I noticed that, mamma; but how surprised he will be to find brother Gordon gone."

"Yes, and I only wish now Gordon had not gone, for Captain Bestor would have taken him to England, for he must have found Don Moro and purchased the yacht from him, as he spoke of doing."

"Perhaps he may go over and bring him back, mamma?"

"No, I think now he will settle here, if he likes the Bay View Plantation, which Gordon found out he could buy, as Planter Ross is anxious to sell and go to the city to live."

"He will be a near neighbor then, mamma, for it is across the bay at the Pass! but here comes a boat from the side of the Sea Shell."

The two watched the boat, saw it run in to the wharf and Frank Bestor spring ashore.

A few moments after he reached the piazza, and was warmly welcomed by the mother and daughter.

"But where is Gordon?" he asked.

"Gone to England, for he had to go over and see his attorneys about his estates, for you know my husband would neither claim his title or the income of the property he inherited."

"Yes, Gordon talked to me about it, and I told him I would take him over to England in the Sea Shell; but of course he did not know when to expect me."

"But your vessel looks as though she had been through bad weather?"

"Yes, Mrs. Grayhurst, as I did not see Don Moro in Vera Cruz I had to cross the ocean to find him, and on the way back we had terrible weather."

"Then you found Don Moro?"

"Oh, yes, madam."

"And may we expect him home soon?"

"Before very long."

"Did he not send any message to me?" asked Estelle, poutingly.

"The truth was, Miss Estelle, I only saw him once, and having had some business matters to settle with him we had no time to talk of pleasant matters and old friends, and the Don expected to see me again; but having accomplished my business with him, I was glad to get away."

Breakfast was now announced by Luke, and an enjoyable meal it was, though all missed the young master of Belle Eden.

"Have you decided as to the future, Captain Bestor?" asked Mrs. Grayhurst, as they returned to the piazza, and the young sailor was told to light his cigar.

"I secured the Sea Shell from Don Moro, so will send her over to New Orleans to refit, and apply for a commission for her as an armed yacht, if I can secure a place here, which I am most anxious to do, for I like this Gulf shore immensely."

"Then let me tell you that Gordon found the Ross Plantation for you, and it is a lovely home,

though it has not been kept up as it should have been."

"How far is that from here, may I ask?"

"Just across the bay, on the shores of Pass Christian—yonder, do you see a white tower rising above the trees up the bay?"

"Yes, distinctly," and taking the glass handed to him by Estelle, Frank Bestor turned it upon the spot indicated.

"It is a beautiful shore, and, as there are no houses near it, I judge it must be a large estate."

"It is, for there are several thousand acres to it, and the mansion has over twenty rooms, quite an imposing home for a bachelor."

"Mr. Ross has a plantation on the Mississippi, and dwells there most of the time, so concluded to sell Bay View, and will let the slaves, house-servants and all go with it if he gets his price."

"Do you know what he asks for it, madam?"

"I think a hundred thousand dollars; but it is cheap at that, though considerable money will have to be put upon the mansion, negro quarters and grounds."

"And it will have to be refurnished, and in that I will have to leave all to your taste, Mrs. Grayhurst."

"Then you think you will take it?"

"Certainly, if I like it after seeing it, and I would like to ask yourself and Miss Estelle to sail over with me and overlook the place."

This proposition was received with pleasure by both Mrs. Grayhurst and Estelle, and the little yacht was gotten ready at once and headed for Bay View Plantation.

The young adventurer found good water there for his yacht, and was delighted with the shores.

The grounds were neglected, but could soon be restored to their former beauty, and the mansion needed a thorough overhauling, as did also the out-houses and negro quarters.

Otherwise the plantation, with its vast fields of rich lands and superb forests, was a most desirable home, and one that would yield a large income under proper cultivation.

Having ascertained from the overseer that Planter Ross lived on his place below the city of New Orleans, Frank Bestor decided to at once go there in his yacht and close the bargain, so the Sea Shell set sail that afternoon, and favored by a good breeze, dropped anchor off the home of the planter the second day.

The bargain was quickly concluded, a sum of money paid down, and promising to pay the balance within sixty days, Frank Bestor sent workmen over to at once begin the needed repairs to the mansion and lay out the grounds.

Having set things going to his satisfaction, Frank Bestor set sail in the Sea Shell once more, and the destination of the pretty vessel was a small port on the coast of Massachusetts.

That seaport was the place where Frank Bestor had passed his boyhood days.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A HIDDEN TREASURE.

WHEN Frank Bestor had given up his life as a free rover—a life, remember, kind reader, which had not been of his seeking, but forced upon him by a cruel destiny out of his power to avoid—he had gotten a very liberal fortune as his share of treasure.

In all of his service as a pirate officer he had protected the weak, saved many a life that would have otherwise been sacrificed, and with his own hands had never taken booty won under the black flag of Captain Pierre.

But when the settlement came, and Pierre the Pirate divided his booty, then Frank Bestor took his share.

To restore it to those who had lost it was impossible, and not to take it was to give it to Pierre the Pirate, already rich in treasure.

Then too Frank Bestor, it will not be forgotten, had gone forth from his home to win the woman of his love by matching her fortune with one of his own.

How was that fortune to be made except by lawless acts?

Miriam Weston was his idol, the only one who had won his heart, and he would have done anything to claim her as his bride.

At last, to return home and find her the wife of another, was enough to have driven him with free will into piracy.

But instead he had shown that he was made of sterner stuff, and, after rescuing her brother from the gallows, he had gone to see if he could not find Gordon Grayhurst and restore him to his home.

This he did with a sequel already known to the reader.

Having made Miriam a widow, by killing her husband in a duel, he dared not face her, and so kept away from her presence.

Axious to lead a different life, and at the same time to keep an eye on Don Moro, that he harmed no more the Grayhursts, he decided to buy the home of Bay View.

He knew that he had more than enough treasure to pay for it, and the estate would bring him in a generous income to live upon, and there, on the Gulf shores he would pass his days, contented, if not happy.

With the money of the Don's found on the

Sea Shell when he cut her out, and other that he had, he had paid one-third of the purchase money, and his run north was to secure his treasure, which he had hidden away, and make the rest of the payment with it.

It was night when the Sea Shell, looking considerably weather-worn after her African voyage, glided into the little harbor on the Massachusetts Coast and silently let fall her anchor a cable's length off-shore, and under the shadow of a high cliff.

Telling two of his African crew to lower the gig and accompany him ashore, the sailor soon after landed upon the beach in front of a small cottage.

It was the home of his boyhood, where his mother had moved with him, from their fine home up in the village, after his father's death and financial breakdown.

There his mother had died while he was away at sea, and in front of the little cottage he had, one moonlight night, called to account for the financial ruin of his father, the persecution of his mother, and the marrying of the woman he loved, Gregory Vance, who had fallen by his hand, and his father and mother were avenged; but in avenging himself by the death of Vance, he had dug a grave between Miriam and himself.

Such were the thoughts that forced themselves through the brain of Frank Bestor, as he sailed his vessel into an anchorage off the cliff.

Up the harbor lights were visible from vessels at anchor off the town, and from many houses came the glimmer through the windows, showing where happy family circles were gathered around the hearth.

The little cottage had no light in it, and the gate was locked; but even in the darkness did Frank Bestor see that no weeds grew in the walk, and all had been kept in perfect repair.

Well did he know the one that had had the work done.

The night was dark, for the moon had not yet risen, and anxious to carry out the object of his coming at once, the sailor threw a coil of rope over his shoulder, for he had brought it with him from the vessel, took up a shaded lantern, and with a sigh turned away from the cottage.

His steps led him up the steep cliff pathway, and he soon reached the top and walked along until he came to a tree growing near the brink.

Here he paused, and making one end of his rope fast to the tree, he dropped the other end over the cliff and heard it fall upon the sands far below.

Then he placed a pad under the rock edge, to prevent the rope from wearing, and with his lantern swung at his back went over the cliff and downward, hand under hand, with a nerve and ease that only a sailor could show.

Some seventy feet from the top he halted and began to swing himself to and fro.

At last he swung against a scrub growing in the side of the cliff, and seizing it with one hand drew himself to the rocky shelf upon which it grew.

Making his rope fast he unshaded his lantern and disappeared as though in the very face of the rock, for an opening there was, invisible from every point except where he stood.

It was a crevice, or slit in the cliff that formed a narrow cavern.

Into this Frank Bestor went, his lantern lighting his way, and soon came to a halt.

Glancing upward he saw a rocky shelf, and placing his lantern on a projection of the side of the cave, he reached up, and with an effort took down a heavy, iron-bound box.

"I knew it would be safe in here," he muttered to himself, and carrying it to the entrance to the cave he drew up the lower end of the rope and made it fast around the box.

Then he lowered it to the sandy beach below, and taking his lantern, once more shaded, he swung off on the rope and went rapidly downward the sixty feet to the shore.

Unfastening the rope, he carried the box to where his boat awaited him, and placing it in the stern, laid the oarsmen carry it out to the Sea Shell and place it in the cabin, after which they were to return for him.

As the boat moved away, the moon soared above the horizon, just commencing to wane, and its mellow light cast a silvery glare over the sea and land.

Ascending the cliff-path to the tree, Frank Bestor unfastened the rope and dropped the end over to the beach below.

Then he turned and walked rapidly away from the spot until he came to a broad highway.

Taking this, he held on up the ridge, when it branched off, one road leading down to the town.

The one he followed led up the hill to the City of the Dead.

The moon lighted his path, and as he entered the sacred spot, glimmered brightly upon the tombs.

The moan of the surf came to his ears, and a hum rose from the town, where all the bustle of the day was not yet over.

Reaching the spot he sought, the graves of his kindred, the sailor stood with uncovered head gazing down upon them.

Then he started, for there came to his ears the sound of a voice in song.

It was a woman's voice, rich, melodious and full of pathos in every tone.

There was the low music of a guitar heard now and then accompanying the singer, and the sailor turned in the direction from whence came the sound.

He knew that the singer was on the piazza of a grand house down on the ridge, and in a straight line not very far away.

The balmy breeze stealing in from the sea, bore the sound of the voice to his ears, and he could at times hear the words she uttered.

He turned again to the grave, uttered a few words in a low tone, that sounded like a prayer, and then left the sacred spot.

His steps were down the roadway, but he sprung over a fence as he reached the ridge and walked toward the mansion from whence had come the sound of singing.

There, not very far distant, so situated as to command a fine view of land and sea, the harbor and the town, was a large mansion, glimmering in the moonlight.

It was the home of the woman he loved, the home of Miriam Vance, the beautiful young widow of Gregory Vance, the woman whom he had made a widow.

He stood silently gazing at the mansion for a long time.

The sweet voice no longer floated on the air in song, and all was silent about the mansion.

There was a light in the hallway, and another shone from the windows of a room he knew to be the library.

With a heart aching at its grief he turned to retrace his way to the shore, when he started as there, not ten feet from him stood a human being.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SEPARATE WAYS.

SEATED upon the piazza of her elegant home, and sending the tones of her exquisite voice out upon the balmy night air, Miriam Vance little dreamed who heard every note she uttered.

Her song was a sad one, a ballad she was wont to sing when her heart was heavy—one that she had learned from the only man she had ever loved, wife though she had been to another.

She had laid aside her mourning robes, for her heart was not in the grave with the dead.

Forced to marry Gregory Vance to save her father from financial wreck and her brother from prison, she had done her duty toward the man she was wedded to, but no more.

She had told him she did not love him, for her heart was another's.

That other had come to claim her, ready to match her fortune with one of his own, but how obtained she did not know; but he had come too late.

When her brother had been saved by him from the gallows she knew that he was not revengeful, as she had feared.

To that lover, to be cast out of her heart, her wild, reckless, spendthrift brother owed his changed life.

It was no temporary reform with Carter Weston, her brother, that she well knew.

He had proven that his heart, his whole life, had changed, and, unwilling to live on his sister's bounty, he had left her alone in her magnificent home, and gone to the city and secured a good situation, that brought him a generous support.

When her season of mourning was over, or, more truthfully speaking, her time for wearing widow's weeds had passed, Miriam Vance found herself the object of a great deal of admiration and attention.

Her superb home, with its numberless acres, beautiful grounds, hot-houses full of rare plants and flowers, and elegant silver service, were the admiration of all in the town and the neighborhood.

A dinner or supper at Sea Cliffs, as she had rechristened her home, was a treat to be remembered, and the neighbors never tired of talking of the princely magnificence of the lovely widow's mansion and all in it.

Ever generous, the poor of the town found in her a noble friend, and many were the kindnesses received from her fair hands.

Though living in a style no one in the place equaled, she was not in the least proud, and the humblest could ever receive from her a kind word and a smile.

Such was the widow of Sea Cliffs, when she is again presented to the reader that moonlit night, singing to ears she little suspected heard her song.

Impatiently throwing aside her guitar, as though the song, or the memories it recalled, fretted her, she arose, walked up and down the piazza for a few turns, and then, lured by the beauty of the night, descended the broad stone steps and strolled down the gravel walk toward the massive gateway that led from the highway into the grounds.

Beyond the highway was a level lawn, here and there dotted with a few majestic trees, and then came the cliffs.

The walk led to the cliff, where a summer-

house had been built, from whence a grand view could be obtained.

Not very far from the retreat, along the cliff, stood the tree which Frank Bestor had used for his rope in descending to the cavern for his treasure.

Strolling as far as the gate, there Miriam had paused, and her eyes rested upon the sea beyond the cliffs.

"Tell me, oh, sea, if he is on thy bosom tonight!

"Where wanders he over the blue waters?

"Can it be that he is, what men have said he was, a free rover, a cruel buccaneer?

"No! no! no! I will never believe it of him.

"Ah me! why do I think of him, for are we not parted forevermore?"

She tossed her head impatiently, in the same mood as when she had thrown aside her guitar, and retraced her steps toward the mansion.

The path wound its way among ornamented shrubbery here and there scattered along its border, and suddenly she halted, while a cry arose to her lips, but was suppressed.

There before her stood a man.

His arms were folded upon his broad breast, his form, tall and commanding, was clad in uniform, the moonlight glimmering upon the gold lace and epaulettes, while a sable plume fell almost to his shoulder.

His back was toward her, and yet she knew him.

Could she steal away unseen?

She tried to, and yet had not the power to move.

Why was he there, gazing at her home?

Could she not guess? Did her heart not tell her why?

But why was he in uniform?

Was he in the navy of the United States?

"No, its uniform was different, not so magnificent.

Was he in foreign service?

She hoped so.

But to save her life she could not move from the spot.

Then he turned, and the two were face to face.

She noted him start and then half advance, then check his impulse.

She saw, as the moonlight fell full upon him, his dark face, so handsome, so grand, and yet so deeply tinged with sadness it seemed to her.

He was the first to speak, and he said:

"Pardon me, Mrs. Vance, but I returned home to-night—no, no, not home, for my home is on the sea—but I came to visit my mother's grave, and to get something I had hidden yonder in the cliff, and I could not resist looking at your home."

He paused but she made no reply, and his face flushed and then paled, while he continued:

"I heard you singing, and your voice, the old song I taught you, lured me perhaps to come here—here where I have no right to intrude, and humbly I ask your pardon for crossing your path, and—and—"

Again he paused, but not a word did she utter.

She seemed to be devoid of all speech.

Her form was erect, but it quivered, and her eyes were fixed upon his face as though to look into his innermost soul.

"I will go—good-by!"

He added this in a low tone, took off his hat and bent low before her.

Then he passed on and yet she did not speak.

He walked rapidly down the gravel path toward the gate and then turned.

She still stood where he had left her, only she had turned and was gazing after him.

He was being tempted to retrace his steps and again speak to her.

But he checked the impulse, passed out of the gate, crossed the highway and reached the cliff pathway leading down to his cottage.

Then he again turned.

The white-robed form still stood where he had left her.

He rapidly descended the path, secured his rope, sprung into his waiting boat and was rowed out to his vessel.

The anchor was gotten up, the sails were already set, and the Sea Shell glided seaward.

As she did so he stood near the taffrail and bent his gaze upon his cottage home.

Then he raised his eyes to the cliff.

There, in front of the arbor, with arms outstretched stood the white-robed form.

He turned his glass upon her and saw her drop upon her knees, as though in prayer, and a groan broke from between his lips as he murmured:

"We two are parted forever."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOPE HAVEN.

WHEN the Sea Shell dropped anchor in the port of New Orleans, her captain held a commission from the Government, which read that:

"Frank Bestor, Planter of Hope Haven Plantation, is hereby authorized to arm, and man with slaves, his yacht Sea Shell, for the protection of himself, and cargoes which he may carry from plantation to ports, against lawless rovers of the seas and inland waters of the Gulf of Mexico."

Armed with this commission, such as were then given to planters to protect their vessels carrying produce and stores to and fro, Frank Bestor felt like a new man.

He no longer sailed the seas upon the deck of a havenless, flagless craft, and, as a planter, could respect himself and have others respect him.

He was anxious to get rid of his treasure as soon as possible, thus severing every link that held him to the past, and for the purpose of doing so sought a Jew whom he knew Pierre the Pirate had had dealings with in the past.

With a number of the jewels taken from the strong box, he sought the quarters of the Jew.

He found the shop, a dingy affair, in an obscure street, and went in with a feeling of disgust at his mission there.

The sign over the door read:

"MARCUS GOLDBERG,
Dealer in old gold and silver."

Had Marcus Goldberg named his place "The Curiosity Shop," it would have been most appropriate, for to find something he did not have in there would have been a difficult task indeed.

He met his visitor with a smile, one that was benign, but cunning as well.

"Well, gentlemen, what I do for you this day?" he asked.

"You have traded with Pierre the Pirate, I believe?" was the abrupt question of Frank Bestor.

Had he hit the Jew he could not have startled him more.

"Mine Gott! I trade mit pirates?

"Oh, gentlemen, was you takes me for a dishonest man?"

"Come, I am no officer of the law, Goldberg, so did not come here to entrap you; but I know, having been with Captain Pierre, that you were one who bought his booty, and as I have some to dispose of I have come to make a bargain with you."

"Mine fr'int, just come mit me into mine office, and I will talk to you, but you was startle me talking all about pirate mens."

"I was have t'e heart disease, and you must not scare me too quick."

"I see but I am in a hurry, so let us transact business at once."

The Jew led the way to an inner room.

It was not a pleasant-looking place, and the flavor of onions hung about it; but there was a window there that gave an excellent light, and this was just what Marcus Goldberg wanted to examine diamonds with.

Frank Bestor took out a buckskin bag and placed it upon the desk.

"There, Mr. Goldberg, there are seventy diamonds, forty-six rubies, eighty emeralds, a hundred pearls and thirty miscellaneous stones."

"Count them and see if I am not right, and then make me an offer for the lot."

"They was all correct, gentlemen; but dey was not t'e best stones, you know."

"No, on the contrary I know that they are the very best, and I know to a dollar what each stone is worth."

"I want a fair price, and I have some jewelry, silver and gold service and some other things to bring you; but now tell me what you will give me for this lot?"

The Jew eyed them closely, and he knew well their value; but he always made sixty per cent in a bargain if possible.

"I give you, gentlemen, twenty thousand for t'e lot."

"We cannot trade, Mr. Goldberg," and Frank Bestor was turning away, when the Jew called out:

"Oh, gentlemen, don't go away, for I look over dem stores once more—maybe I don't get good look last time."

He glanced at them merely, and asked:

"How much you wants, gentlemen?"

"Every dollar you will give, for those stones cost human lives, and blood to flow, with any amount of sin upon one's conscience, so gold to their full value I must have."

"Dey was better as I thought, and I give you thirty-five thousand dollars, gentlemen."

"No, sir."

"How much you wants?"

"I know, within a thousand dollars, what the lot is worth, and if I get sixty thousand you will make a handsome sum then."

"Oh, Abrahams! I will not—"

"Very well, I will take them where I will get their value."

"Hold on, gentlemen, for as you was a friend of Captain Pierre, I give you the monish; but I lose on dem, and do it for friendship only."

Bestor laughed, and half an hour after left with the amount he demanded.

That night he carried to the Jew's shop the strong-box, and in his dress as a common sailor, he looked like a seaman carrying his chest ashore.

He received his money for the contents of the box, and the next day Planter Ross was paid in full for his plantation and slaves.

The Sea Shell was then laid up for repairs, and purchasing a plantation lugger, the young sailor started for Bay St. Louis, leaving Molok

The Savages of the Sea.

and a couple of his comrades in charge of the schooner.

Arriving at Hope Haven, as he had named his place, Frank Bestor found that the workmen had not been idle, for the mansion was nearly ready for occupancy, and the grounds had been put in splendid condition.

The negro quarters and out-houses were also nearing completion, the fences had been repaired, and others built where needed, and Hope Haven was putting on a most homelike appearance.

The day after his return to Hope Haven Bestor sailed over to Belle Eden and was greeted by Mrs. Grayhurst and Estelle with pleasure.

He told them of the improvements at Hope Haven and that he would soon be dwelling there, and then asked if word had been received from Gordon.

"Not yet, though it is time," said Mrs. Grayhurst.

"You will soon hear," was the hopeful reply, and the young sailor asked:

"Any news from Don Juan Moro, Mrs. Grayhurst?"

"Not a word, and only yesterday Estelle and myself drove by there and regretted to see it closed up."

"I hope uncle will soon return," said Estelle, and a cloud passed over the handsome face of the young man, as he heard her words.

"You must let me place the Estelle at your service, Captain Bestor, as your schooner is not here, and you can go and come at will, and also live on board until your home is ready for you," said Mrs. Grayhurst.

"Thank you, madam, and I will accept your kind offer, as the lugger is rather clumsy to run back and forth in."

"Yes, and you must come over at your pleasure, for you know how welcome you are here, while I wish you to meet some of our young ladies, as I must select you a wife of course," said Mrs. Grayhurst.

But she saw the look of intense sadness that swept over Bestor's handsome face, and felt that she had touched upon a subject that was painful to him.

That night Frank Bestor sailed back to Hope Haven in the Belle Eden yacht, Estelle, and the next afternoon when he ran over to see his friends he glanced down the coast and started as he saw a vessel at anchor in Castle Moro Cove.

"The Don has returned.

"Now to see who wins the game we are to play, for I do not trust to his oath to me," and Frank Bestor felt that upon him depended the safety of Mrs. Grayhurst, Gordon, and Estelle from the revenge of their pretended friend, but secretly their bitterest foe.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DON'S RETURN.

DON JUAN MORO was as cunning as he was daring.

He had not returned to his home without first knowing all that had happened in the neighborhood, and just how his absence had been regarded.

He had landed at a convenient point, visited New Orleans and sent an ally to get all information for or against him.

He heard the report of his hireling, knew that his sudden departure was looked upon as legitimate, and was made aware that Captain Frank Bestor had purchased a fine estate across the bay, on the shores of Pass Christian, and intended to make it his home.

He also learned that Captain Bestor was regarded as his friend.

With such information, the Don ran into the cove at Castle Moro.

Shannon Vere had taken good care of the estate, and the place was all ready to welcome its master.

The house was thrown open, and Sable resumed his duty as major domo once more.

By breakfast time the following morning all was in shipshape, so to speak.

Instead of running into the anchorage at Belle Eden, as he had intended, when he saw that the Don had returned, Frank Bestor at once headed for Castle Moro.

He wished to be among the first to welcome the Don home.

But he was not the first, for Shannon Vere was soon made acquainted with the fact that the Shark was at her anchorage in the cove, and mounting his horse he rode over to Castle Moro.

The Don was smoking upon the piazza when he rode up and eyed him sharply.

But Shannon Vere was all right, he had kept his promises faithfully and, after grasping his hand the Don congratulated him upon his improved appearance.

"All goes well with you, Vere, I hope?"

"Oh, yes, Don, and the place is beginning to pay well."

"I am glad of it, and I must thank you for having kept my place up in such fine style."

"I was determined not to let it run down; but did you enjoy your visit?"

"Immensely."

"You went to Mexico, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes."

"And to Spain?"

"Of course."

"You look browned up from your voyage."

"Yes, sea air tans one a great deal; but what is the news in the neighborhood?"

"A young sailor, the same who was once your guest here for a few days, and you supposed lost from your yacht, has purchased the Ross Plantation."

"Yes, I met him in Spain, and he had come to return my yacht and her savage crew, which he had picked up at sea, and to tell me of his miraculous escape."

"It was wonderful."

"He is a fine fellow, and an old friend of mine, so I sold him the Sea Shell."

"Indeed?"

"Then he has a craft as fine and fleet as yours?"

"Well, we have not compared them closely yet, and I do not think she can be so fleet as my vessel."

"But he has bought the Ross place, you say?"

"Yes, negroes and all, including those splendid house-servants Ross had here."

"He is fortunate."

"Yes, and rich, for I hear that he paid a hundred thousand dollars cash for the place and all in it, and he is sparing no money to put it all in superb condition, while his vessel is being fitted out at New Orleans."

"For a cruise?"

"Oh, no, only for his personal pleasure, I believe."

"Well, I wish him success, for he is a fine fellow."

"He has bought his furniture, I hear, and his lugger and the yacht are to bring it over."

"But do you know, Don Moro, that I had a call from Captain Bestor when he was here before?"

"You?"

"Yes, he called upon me, and it was after his return with young Grayhurst, who, I forgot to tell you, has been brought home."

"Why, this is indeed news!" and the Don showed well-feigned surprise.

"Yes, and this young Bestor found him in some mysterious way; but Gordon Grayhurst is away again."

"Indeed! but this is news."

"He has gone to England, I learn, to see about his estate and title there, which his father, you know, never cared for."

"True; but when does young Grayhurst return?"

"I do not know."

"Well, you have no more news for me?"

"Well yes, for I had a call from this man Bestor."

"You?"

"Yes."

"It was your place to call, as he was the stranger settling here."

"I call nowhere, except upon you, as you know, Don Moro; but this gentleman called to learn from me your address, as I wrote you to Vera Cruz."

"I received your letters."

"He got no word from me, of course—"

"And yet came to Vera Cruz direct."

"You had given out that you were going to Mexico, then Spain."

"True; but he had the address of Cambras."

"Hah! now I know that he saw your address, when he wrote his letter to you, which I sent!"

"He sat at my desk and it was there under a paper weight, and so he saw it."

"That was it; but you should be more careful in important matters."

"So I see, Don Juan."

"And then?"

"He coolly asked me, to state, should Gordon Grayhurst seek to challenge me, that I was first pledged to fight him."

"Strange."

"No, for his motive was to kill me himself and thus save the boy."

"I see."

"I promised, and then he departed."

"You promised?"

"Yes, for I had no desire to meet young Grayhurst I assure you, for the noble face of his father has haunted me many a night I assure you."

"Nonsense."

"It is not nonsense, but truth."

"Your digestion is not good."

"It is not my digestion that is bad, but my conscience."

"Bah!"

"Why, Don Moro, I met Mrs. Grayhurst and that beautiful daughter of hers one day in the highway."

"I waited, took off my hat and remained silent, with bowed head until they passed."

"You are a fool, Vere."

"Thank you; but I did as I say, and the innocent glance of that girl cut me deep, while her mother seemed to look into my very heart."

"You are not well, my dear Vere; but you promised Bestor what he asked?"

"Yes, and kept it," and he told of the two shots at the deer, and the scene between Gordon Grayhurst and himself.

"Well, the boy is away for the present, and you need feel no dread of a meeting, unless Bestor is anxious to call you out before Gordon's return."

"If so, well and good; but there comes the Belle Eden yacht into your harbor."

"No!"

"Yes, but I heard that Mrs. Grayhurst had loaned it to Captain Bestor, so he may be in it, as he has seen your vessel at anchor in the cove."

"I shall be glad to see him; but stay, do not go."

"Yes, for I do not think it would be pleasant for either Captain Bestor or myself to meet."

"I will ride over again to-morrow."

A few minutes after Shannon Vere mounted his horse and rode away.

As he did so, Frank Bestor landed on the Castle Moro wharf and approached the mansion, where the Don sat watching his approach, a strange look upon his remarkable face.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A TRUCE.

"Ah! we meet again, my dear Captain Bestor, and how well you are looking."

"Welcome to Castle Moro."

The Don spoke in a pleasant, languid sort of way, as though he was greeting a man he was greatly attached to.

"Yes, Don, we meet again, and I must say you are looking better than when we last met in Africa."

"You were worried then."

The Don winced under the shot.

He bit his lip, while Bestor went on to say:

"I hope your voyage was a lucrative one?"

"Ob, yes, I lost no money by the voyage."

"And have now come back to enjoy your riches?"

"As you have, for I learn you have bought a plantation, and will turn planter?"

"Yes, and I have an elegant home I think

"Sail over some time when I get settled and dine with me; but how did you get the news so soon?"

"A friend just called and told me."

"Ab, yes, Mr. Vere, whom I saw ride away."

"A very clever person he is."

"I find him pleasant company, and we are friends."

"So I judged, as you seconded him in his duel with Mr. Grayhurst."

"Some day Mr. Vere and myself may meet, and you will have to second him again, for it shall not interrupt our friendship in the least, I assure you."

The Don was nettled. Here was a man who had been his lieutenant now showing that he meant to be master.

But he mastered his feelings, and said:

"Why, what have you against him?"

"Nothing; but if he should show any desire to force a meeting between young Grayhurst and himself, why I shall deem it my duty to step between."

"He has no quarrel with the boy; it is for the latter to act, if he wishes to avenge his father."

"True, and I mean if Grayhurst should grow revengeful, I shall demand that Mr. Vere first meet me, for I will not see the boy shot down as his father was."

"It was a fair duel."

"The world deems it so, but I do not."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I believe Vere was your tool."

"He did not care to kill Mr. Grayhurst, but you wanted him out of the way."

"The duel came off, you were second to both men, Grayhurst fell, and Vere, a beggar at that time, suddenly became rich."

"Now, look here, Bestor, don't you press me too hard," and the Don's eyes held a threatening look.

"My dear Don, I shall press you to a point where I will impress upon you that young Gordon is not to be done away with, nor harm befall any member of his family."

"You gave me your pledge in Africa, and I only wish to warn you now, upon your arrival, that I shall keep my eye upon you, and, though you may not believe it, I have it in my power to hang you without mercy at any minute."

"Indeed! and you are certainly in the same boat."

"Ob, no, for I have a pardon from the United States Government for what I have done."

"You!" and the face of the buccaneer turned livid.

"Yes."

"In Heaven's name how did you get it

"I would like to be friendly also with Mr. Shannon Vere, but he must have no quarrel with Gordon Grayhurst, for it becomes my quarrel at once, as I know who will be the instigator."

"By Heaven! but I will force you to fight me, Frank Bestor."

"No, you will do no such silly thing, for I will not meet you."

"I do not care to kill you, and I vow you shall not kill me."

"I have something to live for, and I will let you live so long as you do not conflict with the Grayhursts."

"Now do not get angry, but declare a truce between us, for it will do you no good to bar my will."

"What do you say, Don Moro, is it war, or a truce between us?"

"If war?"

"Then I shall carry out certain orders I have."

"And those orders?"

"To hang you, as I said; but I alone know you as you are, so I do not wish to do one thing to harm you, or to mar what happiness you may extract from life."

"If it is a truce between us?"

"Then all will be well, and I'll show you my good will by asking you to run over to Belle Eden to see Mrs. Grayhurst and Estelle, for I was going there when I saw your vessel at anchor in the cove."

"Then let it be a truce between us."

"So be it, and here's my hand on it, Don Moro."

The pirate chief took the hand and grasped it warmly, while he said:

"I will go with pleasure; but I will not have to face the ordeal of recognition from young Grayhurst, as I learn he has gone to England."

"Yes, he sailed some time ago, just before my return, called there by important business I believe connected with his father's death and the estates he inherited."

"He will be back in a few months, but I do not believe he will ever recognize you."

"Nor do I," was the dry reply, and the words meant a great deal, for the Don recalled the island in the Bahamas and whom he had left there to die.

Going on board the yacht, Estelle, the two men, whose lives had been so strangely linked together, sailed up to Belle Eden, arriving just at sunset.

The Don was greeted in a way that showed to Frank Bestor how well he was regarded by both mother and daughter, and Estelle was the recipient of a costly present, which he said he had brought for her from Madrid, Spain.

"Curse him!" muttered Bestor.

"It is one of his acts of piracy, out of his treasure-box."

"But I can say nothing," and he admired the beautiful souvenir as though the Don had obtained it honestly.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

BESTOR'S PARDON.

THAT most important dignitary, the President of the United States, sat in his private office after a good dinner, enjoying a talk with one of his secretaries, when a card was handed in to him.

The card bore a name, and the words, written in a bold hand:

"Would most respectfully request a private audience with his Excellency, the President, upon a matter of great importance."

"This is not my reception day or hour," said the President to the bearer of the card.

"So I told the gentleman, sir, but he said he was a stranger, and his business was urgent."

"Show him in here, for I will see him."

A moment after a tall, splendidly-formed man entered and bowed gracefully before the Chief Magistrate, though in a manner that did not show the sycophant.

He was neatly dressed in black, and his face, darkly bronzed, was strangely handsome and expressive.

There was that about it that at once won the President's respect and admiration.

"Be seated, sir, and say how I can serve you."

"Pardon me, your Excellency, but my business is of a strictly private nature," and he glanced at the secretary, who at once arose.

"I will send for you, Mr. Secretary, when I have heard this gentleman's wishes," said the President, and the secretary left the room.

"Now, sir."

"Mr. President, permit me to give you this letter, from Captain Nevitte, of the navy."

The President took the official looking letter, broke the seal, and read aloud as follows:

"On board brig-of-war Mermaid, Mouth of Potomac River. October 1, 18—"

"Sir:—The bearer of this letter will make known to you his desire for handing to you my official report of an action my vessel had with the two pirate schooners, Terror and Daring, off this coast last night, and in which action the Mermaid was worsted and would have been taken, but for the coming of Captain Bestor and his crew to my rescue."

"Through his desperate courage I not only saved my vessel, but captured the two pirate schooners, both of them splendid craft, well armed and equipped, and with very large booty on board."

"The pirates fought so desperately that few survived, many of them jumping into the sea when they saw all was lost, and the commanders of both outlaw craft were slain, as you will see by my report, which, taking advantage of your friendly regard shown me in the past, I forward to your Excellency."

"Captain Bestor firmly waived all claim to prize money for himself and crew, and making known his story to me, requested a letter to your Excellency with facts as given."

"My brig is too badly damaged to come at once to port, and the two schooners must also be put in condition, for they suffered much in their rigging by our fire; but the moment I can do so I will report in person, and meanwhile intrust this letter to Captain Bestor, with the hope that your Excellency may favorably listen to his appeal."

"I have the honor to be your Excellency's obedient servant, P. E. SLOAT."

"Commanding U. S. brig-of-war Mermaid."

The President carefully read the letter through, and then, without uttering a word, perused the official report.

"Captain Bestor, I congratulate you upon your splendid courage, and would ask how you happened to go to the rescue of the brig?"

The face of the sailor flushed; but he had evidently made up his mind to make a clean breast of it, and he said:

"To explain, your Excellency, I will have to bore you with the story of my life."

"It will not be boring me, sir, I assure you."

"Your Excellency is most kind to me; but not to intrude upon your valuable time, I will say that in me you see a reformed pirate."

"Not a pirate from choice, but from a cruel fate that forced me into piracy to save my life," and with distinct utterance the young sailor rapidly told the story of his life.

He did not betray that he knew where Captain Pierre the Pirate was; but he told how he had been lost off the yacht of a planter, had picked up the Sea Shell at sea, with her Sea Savages on board, and had gone to the rescue of Carter Weston, who had been condemned to be hanged for his act.

He concealed nothing about himself, and stated that he was then returning to a home in the South where he hoped to live an honorable life.

Seeing that the brig had begun a battle with a large schooner, and was attacked by another vessel that ran out of an inlet near, he had gone to the rescue, fortunately just in time.

He had run into an inlet to cut a topmast, for his schooner's fore-topmast had been carried away in a blow, and was thus conveniently near to help the brig.

He had claimed no prize money, for he had plenty for himself.

His vessel had no flag, but he hoped to have her commissioned as an armed yacht, if his Excellency would only grant him the pardon he appealed for, and also an order to capture Captain Pierre and other pirates, where he could find them, for having served under a buccaneer flag he knew something of their haunts.

He told the President that his crew of Sea Savages were happy with him, and wished him to bring over their families to live in America, and he gave much valuable information for the suppression of the slave trade on the African Coast, and of the rendezvous of the slaves in the West Indies.

So deeply interested was the President in his visitor and his story, that he sent word to the secretary that he would not be able to see him again until the morrow.

He made notes of all that Frank Bestor said, and asked:

"Where is your vessel now, sir?"

"In the river, sir, below the city."

"And you have only your crew of Sea Savages on board?"

"That is all, sir."

"You have purchased a plantation on the Gulf shores?"

"Yes, sir."

"And wish there to live, having a commissioned armed yacht for your use, in going to and from ports, carrying the produce of your plantation and bringing supplies?"

"Yes, your Excellency; but all would be of little worth without the pardon I crave of you for the past."

"My dear sir, I do not believe you willfully did wrong, and I can thoroughly understand your position and all it led to."

"But a pardon is necessary, and you shall have it, as also a commission for your vessel, and I certainly shall see that you get the order regarding that arch fiend, Pierre the Pirate, and I hope that you may capture and hang him, if he be not already dead, as I have heard."

"Of course you desire no publicity to this affair, and I will see that there is none; but I will consult with my cabinet to-morrow, and if you will call at this room to-morrow evening, I will have the papers ready for you."

Frank Bestor's voice quivered as he expressed his joy and gratitude, and promptly he was on hand the next night, and returned to his vessel a proud and happy man, for he bore in his pocket a pardon for the past, and it had been

no idle threat that he had made to Don Moro, that he had orders to hang him when he chose, as the reader can now understand, having been let into the adventure of the Sea Shell on her cruise homeward from the Massachusetts Coast.

CHAPTER XL.

A FEAST AT HOPE HAVEN.

THE situation on the shores of the Bay St. Louis was a strange one.

Belle Eden, in all its beauty, was certainly an attractive house, and its mistress, the beautiful widow, was loved by all who knew her, while Estelle was universally admired.

Suitors the widow had by the score, but her heart was in the grave with her husband, and she cared for no one it seemed, though rumor had it that Don Moro would be the successful one if she ever married again.

Then there was Castle Moro, grand as an English estate, and with its bachelor master living like a king among his black subjects.

His handsome yacht lay at anchor in the cove, ready to add to the pleasure of the Don at his own sweet will, and his estate gave him pleasant employment in seeing that all went well upon it.

The Don was a popular man in the neighborhood, and there was no poor family that had not benefited through his generosity.

He gave superb dinners where only the most select were invited, and though he was the avowed friend of Shannon Vere, he never made the mistake of inviting him at the time when Mrs. Grayhurst and Estelle were to be present.

That young planter had gone more into society of late.

He had "come out of his shell" so to speak, and several families had asked him to their houses.

He had begun to break up his life of an exile by going to one of the Don's fashionable dinners.

He had been regarded with curiosity, a few had treated him coldly, but others were willing to forget and forgive his past, especially as he was reputed very wealthy.

He certainly had reformed, and more, he was very courtly in his manners, dignified, could converse most entertainingly when he chose and withal was handsome and had a certain romance about his life that made him very attractive to the younger people.

He had returned the dinner party invitation of the Don, by giving one at Shannon Hall, duplicating the invitation sent out from Castle Moro, whether they had treated him coldly or kindly.

Nearly all had accepted, and so Shannon Vere had crossed the threshold of society once more.

His dinner was a grand one, all admitted.

His silver service was not as massive as the Don's, his servants not as perfectly trained, nor his home as grand; but it was a pronounced success, and he was set down as a perfect host.

Then there was another cause of comment in the neighborhood, and this was the coming of Frank Bestor.

His home, it is true, was across the bay, but it was not a long run over, and his friends were Don Moro and the Widow Grayhurst.

This was sufficient to give him the entree anywhere and everywhere.

Captain Bestor was reported as having been in foreign service, but nothing was really known of him.

He had been at the Don's dinner, and so had been invited to the one at Shannon Hall.

He had accepted, and he had won golden opinions for himself.

He had a voice that was sympathetic as well as brilliant, and he was an accomplished musician as well.

Then he was a brilliant conversationalist, told a good story, and withal was a traveler and very rich.

What more did he need to win the hearts of the ladies, and the friendship of the men?

In his turn he had given a dinner-party.

Of course Mrs. Grayhurst and Estelle had been invited, and they went.

The widow had consulted Frank Bestor, who had become her adviser in place of the Don, and she had decided that she should shun no place on account of Shannon Vere's being there.

She need not appear to know of his existence, and so she had accepted.

Frank Bestor had his yacht, covered with flags, stand over along the coast, picking up the various guests at different points, so it had been a delightful sail as well, and as they were to return by moonlight, it was decided by all that Hope Haven was the very place of all to give a dinner-party.

There had been wondering looks and comments in low tones, when the Sea Shell stood in toward Shannon Hall, whose master was seen coming off in a small boat.

All eyes were turned upon Mrs. Grayhurst and Estelle as the master of Shannon Hall came aft to greet his host, for Captain Bestor was talking to the widow at the time.

The face of Shannon Vere paled as he advanced, and he hesitated; but Frank Bestor stepped forward and said:

The Savages of the Sea.

"Glad to see you, Vere, and as you are the last of my guests, we will head for Hope Haven now."

"You have friends here, so I need not present you."

It was cleverly done, and Mrs. Grayhurst did not change color, while Shannon Vere was placed at his ease at once.

Turning to Molok, Frank Bestor said something to him in the tongue of his people, and the yacht squared away for Hope Haven across the bay, the guests greatly impressed by the silent crew of Sea Savages.

The beauties of Hope Heaven called out loud praise from all, as the Sea Shell neared her anchorage, and when the mansion was reached, many a fond mother present hoped that it might become the home of her daughter.

In every particular Hope Haven was a charming abode, and it was furnished throughout with a taste that surprised all, when a bachelor had been the one to furnish it.

The negro servants were perfectly trained, the dinner all that one could desire, and the wines were of the very best, so that nothing was lacking to make Frank Bestor's hospitality a grand success.

Perfectly delighted with their entertainment, the guests prepared to return home at an earlier hour than they wished, as the mutterings of a coming storm were heard, and the whole party now started for the shore to go on board the Sea Shell.

CHAPTER XLI.

A FIGHT FOR A LIFE

The guests of Frank Bestor saw that they had not been too soon in taking their departure from Hope Haven.

The Sea Shell was alongside of the dock in the cove, and they hastily got on board.

Then the vessel moved off under her jib alone, and headed out of the cove, the Sea Savages setting sail as she went along.

It was bright moonlight, but inky clouds were moving up from the south, threatening soon to overcast the heavens, and the deep roar of thunder was heard, while ever and anon vivid forked lightning rent the dark waves in twain.

It was going to be a nasty night, as sailors say, and none knew it better than did Don Juan Moro and Frank Bestor.

But the Don knew the yacht, and more, he was well aware just what kind of a man her captain was.

He had seen Frank Bestor command a vessel in too many severe tornadoes, not to have perfect confidence in him.

Then all hoped that the yacht would reach the separate points of disembarking before the storm struck her.

The Sea Savages did their duty in silence. They seemed not to know whether a storm or calm threatened, or to care.

They were ready to obey the command of their Sea Chief, if it was to set upon his guests and hurl them into the sea.

They were simply black machines, and he was the engineer to set them in motion, or keep them still.

Once out of the cove, the Sea Shell bent gracefully to the breeze, and went dashing along under full sail.

There were those on board who looked anxious at this, but they did not know the crew of Savages of the Sea.

Over the moonlit waters she glided at a ten-knot speed, going straight toward the coming storm, which had now half-obscured the heavens with its blackness.

But, fleet as the Sea Shell was, the storm was fleeter, and with a roar it prepared to burst in fury upon the sea.

One ringing order in a strange tongue broke from the lips of Frank Bestor, and in an instant, it seemed, the sails came down with a run, topsails disappeared, and the schooner was stripped to reefed-down mainsail and forestay-sail.

Then down came the tall topmasts, housed in a moment; in came the needle-like bowsprit that ran far out over the razor-like bows, and with every man at his post, and two at the wheel, the vessel was ready to meet the gale.

"Splendid! splendidly done, Bestor!"

"By Heaven, but I never saw quicker or better work on any craft," cried Don Moro in his enthusiasm, and those on board who understood seamanship were loud in their praise of the Sea Savages' work.

And not a moment too soon had come the change, from a vessel under full sail to one under hauled topmasts and close-reefed mainsail and forestaysail.

The tornado, for such it seemed, was upon them, and the guests were hastened to the cabin, where it had been impossible to get them to go before.

The huge wall of waters and mass of howling winds were upon the schooner, which was raised in air as though to be hurled bottom-upward, and then came a lull.

The storm had struck its first blow, and the schooner had met it bravely.

But a torrent of waters had swept the deck, and there rang out a wild shriek of terror, a cry for help.

Then a white-robed form was seen to go over the side on the top of a wave, and immediately after a man's form had followed.

"My God! my child is lost!"

The cry came from Mrs. Grayhurst, and she fell fainting into the arms of Frank Bestor, who had come aft at the cry for help.

He quickly gave her into the strong grasp of Don Moro, and said hoarsely:

"Bear her to the cabin!

"This is awful!

"See that the ladies all go, and you return on deck!"

He turned and sprung toward the life-boat, and half a dozen of his Sea Savages rushed to his side.

In a moment the life-boat was ready to launch, and just then Don Moro came on deck:

"Take command! I will save her!"

It was a command that he gave not a request.

"Some one went to her aid, and was seen to grasp her in his arms; but who no one knows," said the Don.

"Take command! I will save them!"

The voice was hoarse, but there was that in it of conscious power to do as he said, that brought a cheer from those who heard the words that meant to do or die.

The Don could well take command, as Frank Bestor knew.

He was as skilled a seaman as sailed the seas, he knew the Sea Shell well, and more, he knew the tongue of the Sea Savages.

Another wave swept by, and upon it went the life-boat.

Frank Bestor was at the tiller, and six African savages, strong of arm, fearless of heart, and with iron endurance held the oars.

The Don gave it no thought, he turned to see to the yacht.

The lull was nearly over, and the Sea Shell, with the precious lives on board, needed all his care.

He knew that the life-boat would live, and Frank Bestor knew the bay well.

The yacht must be kept off the shore, she must head toward the Gulf, she must drive right into the teeth of the gale and ride it out.

Those who had heard of the Don's skill as a sailor felt confident.

There were others who were sorry that Frank Bestor left the schooner.

Half a score of men were grouped on deck, white-faced, anxious, hoping.

In the cabin were others, trying to calm the fears of the ladies, while unconscious still, in a swoon that seemed death itself, lay Mrs. Grayhurst, while over her, forgetful of themselves, hung anxious women with tender hands, doing all in their power for her.

Then came a shrieking of winds overhead, a roaring of waters, the rude shrieks of waves and the yacht was once more battling with the mad tempest, fighting for life against death.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOPE.

THE Sea Shell, though called a yacht, was a large schooner, and certainly a very stanch one.

She had good length, fair beam, high, sharp bows, and was as buoyant as a cork.

She had proven herself a sea-boat in every kind of weather, and never had she when in mid-ocean raised a dread in the breast of her commander that she would not come through a tempest all right.

To house her topmasts, haul in her bowsprit and put her under close-reefed canvas was to make her as safe a boat as one could wish, and this Frank Bestor had done with her when he saw the tempest about to break upon him.

Without his precious freight on board he would have met the tornado without a change in the rig of his vessel, knowing well that she could stand it.

Her pivot-guns were firmly mounted, and everything about her was at all times ready to meet a foe or a gale.

The crew were always to be depended upon—silent, fearless, strong, active and thoroughly disciplined as they were.

The Don knew the vessel and the crew, and so he too was confident, while the Sea Savages were equally confident in the commander their master had placed over them.

The Don knew he must head for the Gulf.

To remain in those land-locked waters would be to go ashore.

So he headed for the Gulf, and the schooner bent to the work cut out for her with a will.

Those on deck watched the storm, the Don, the crew and the behavior of the vessel and they were hopeful.

All thought of the beautiful young girl torn away by the cruel waves, of the brave man who had sprung to her rescue, and again of Bestor and his life-boat crew who had dared the seas to find them both.

Would any of them ever be heard of again?

With the excitement on board, some of the guests on the quarter-deck, some in the cabin, others forward crowding for safety along the weather bulwarks, no one knew who it was that had sprung overboard to the rescue of Estelle.

If any one knew, they did not make their knowledge known.

The storm was too violent to last long, and in less than fifteen minutes the fierce winds had blown out their strength.

The pressure against the schooner lightened, the sea became less violent, and the vessel did not stagger under the rude shocks of the waves.

"It is over," said the Don, calmly, and he pointed to a break in the skies where the moonlight peered through.

A few moments more and the storm-clouds swept away, and the full moon shone brightly down upon the still wild waters.

The wind had dropped to half a gale, the sea was no longer lashed to fury, and the schooner swung around gracefully and put back for the shore.

In the cabin a sad scene presented itself.

All had dreaded death, until there came word to them that the storm was over, and the schooner was heading for Belle Eden, the nearest point where they could land.

All but one, I should have said, dreaded death.

That one was Mrs. Grayhurst, for, with the her daughter lost, for her part she would have welcomed death.

As for Gordon, he was strong and brave, and could face the world and its sorrows, sufferings and trials.

She had suffered so much in the past she was content to die if Estelle must be taken from her.

She had recovered from her deep swoon, and gazed upon the kind faces about her.

Dr. Dillon Spotswood had been one of the guests, and he had done all in his power to bring her back to consciousness, though he had said that perhaps it were better for her to remain unconscious until the fate of Estelle was known.

She had shuddered as she opened her eyes and beheld him.

Perhaps it was because she recalled that he had been her husband's surgeon in the fatal duel.

"My child?"

It was all she said, yet why say more.

"One of the crew sprung to her rescue, and Captain Bestor launched the life-boat at once and has gone in it with six of his savages to pick her up."

So had explained Doctor Spotswood.

The mother sighed, and said:

"If man can save her, that man can."

All knew that she meant Frank Bestor, and all were of her opinion regarding him.

She was strangely calm, rose to a sitting posture, and placing her handkerchief over her face, either to shut out the light, or hide her anguish, she said:

"I can only wait."

She did not speak again, did not heed the cries of fear about her as the schooner plunged through the tempest-swept sea, nor seemed to hear the howling of the winds.

Her thoughts were with her child in those mad waters, her prayers for the brave man who had dared death to go to her rescue.

The wind ceased its howling, the schooner no longer plunged and lurched, and kind voices said hopeful things to the poor mother.

But she heeded nothing, only remained silent in her overpowering grief.

At last Don Juan Moro entered the cabin.

"Mrs. Grayhurst, when Bestor went off in the life-boat he left me in command."

"The storm is over, the wind is merely a strong breeze now and the sea has run down, so I am heading for Belle Eden, and in fifteen minutes will come to an anchor, so cheer up, for if man could save you your child, that man is Frank Bestor."

Almost her very words.

They gave her hope and she did rouse herself, and soon after was on deck.

The storm-clouds had passed far away to the Northward, the moon shone brightly and the schooner was gliding along at a lively pace straight for the light that shone from the library of Belle Eden.

What the mother's thoughts were who can tell, as she gazed upon her home.

Was Death to again stalk across its threshold?

A short while more and the yacht swept around and slowly glided toward the wharf of Belle Eden, for being under the lee of the land the waters there were comparatively calm.

Most of the guests on board had gotten on at Belle Eden, and there their carriages awaited them, so all concluded to go ashore at that point and return to their respective homes, while the Don went in the schooner in search of the life-boat.

The moment the last guest had stepped ashore Don Moro gave the order to cast off and the Sea Shell sailed away on her search.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A LIFE FOR A LIFE.

THE wave which had swept along the schooner's decks, and borne Estelle into the sea, had very nearly carried others with her.

But she had lost her hold of the taffrail, and had been swept at once away on the torrent that rushed back into the sea.

One cry of terror, another for help, and she felt herself in the wild waters.

Her dress supported her, and she could also swim; but what would be her struggles with such a sea.

She gave up all hope, and calmly resigned herself to her fate, her thoughts turning upon her mother's grief rather than upon her own sad fate.

Suddenly she felt a grasp upon her arm.

She gave a slight cry, for she supposed it was shark.

But an arm slipped about her waist, and a voice close to her ear said:

"Do not fear, for I will help you until they lower a boat."

In the darkness and the driving spray she could not see the face of the speaker.

Surely he must have followed her quickly overboard to have found her in the darkness and wild waters, in which she had not yet been two minutes.

"Oh, why did you come to try and save me, sir, for you will only die with me," she cried.

"Oh, no, for I am a tireless swimmer—see! how easily I support you, and they will soon launch a boat to pick us up."

His words, spoken close in her ear, had a cheery ring to them.

Who was he?

Why the Don, or Bestor, of course.

She could not tell which, and she would not ask at such a moment.

But she found that his words were true, for he easily upheld her, though her clothes had now become wet through.

His arm about her waist was firm, and he had drawn her hand over his shoulder so as to give her more aid.

He did not swim, but merely supported himself and her in the water, and apparently without much effort.

At the same time he seemed to be glancing out over the wild waters whenever a high wave would bear them on its crest.

"No boat can live in such a sea," cried Estelle.

"I think so; but if not, the sea and wind are driving us across the bay toward the pass, and we can land there, for I can keep afloat with you for hours."

Of course it was Bestor, thought Estelle, for she recalled how he had been washed overboard from the Sea Shell on the night of the storm in Mobile Bay, when Don Moro's guest, and had sustained himself for hours.

So she said:

"If you feel tired, Captain Bestor, release me, and save yourself, I implore you."

"Never!"

The word was sternly uttered, and then came the words:

"We live or die together, Estelle Grayhurst!"

His manner was so earnest it fairly startled her, and she was silent.

As it was, the dashing waters made conversation most difficult.

Suddenly the deep voice of her rescuer rung out over the wild sea, just as the lull in the storm was over, and the winds were coming with a second rush.

"Ahoy! aboy the life-boat!

"Life-boat, ahoy!"

In trumpet tones rung out the voice, for life, for death.

Then over the waters, and not far away came back:

"Ay, ay! hail often to give us your bearings!"

The keen eye of the rescuer had caught sight of the life-boat, and the keen ear of Frank Bestor had caught the hail, though hurled against the wind.

The hail again and again rung out:

"Life-boat aboy! ahoy!"

And the clear voice of Estelle also hailed:

"Life-boat aboy! ahoy!"

Steadily down upon them bore the boat, Frank Bestor standing up and guiding her, and two blacks, one on either bow watching, while the other four steadied her with the oars.

"Ahoy!" rung out the voice now hoarse with hailing.

"Ahoy, the life-boat, ahoy!" came in the clear, ringing voice of Estelle.

"Ay, ay, I see you! I'll run to leeward and come round!"

"Stand ready to get aboard in all haste, for yonder comes another rush of wind and water."

The tones of Frank Bestor were calm, and each word was distinctly uttered.

Another moment and the life-boat wore round the strong arms of the two Africans seized Estelle and placed her at the feet of their master, and then the form of her rescuer was drawn into the boat.

And not a second too soon, for the two blacks

had just time to seize their oars, the daring helmsman only an instant to bring his boat around, when the second burst of tempest was upon them.

Crouching at the feet of Bestor, half-lying, half-sitting in the bottom of the boat, Estelle Grayhurst knew that he had not been the one who had sprung into the sea to rescue her.

She had, by a vivid flash of lightning, as the blacks drew him into the boat forward, and he had sunk there, as though not wishing to be seen, caught sight of his face.

And that glimpse that she had, had paled her face more than had her peril, while from her pallid, quivering lips came the words, involuntarily spoken aloud:

"It is Shannon Vere!"

"The man who killed my father has saved my life!"

Frank Bestor was too much employed in keeping his boat steady to watch aught else.

He had believed it one of his crew, whom he knew swam like a fish, who had sprung over to Estelle's rescue, until he had heard the hail.

The voice he had not recognized; but the flash of lightning had revealed to him the face of Shannon Vere, as it had to Estelle.

He too had seen how he had seemed to delay in getting into the boat, and then had shrunk away forward, crouching down in the bows as though anxious to conceal himself, and at that instant the lightning's flash had revealed him.

Frank Bestor knew that the life-boat would live in any weather.

He had no fear now of their safety.

He had no dread for the schooner under Don Moro's command.

But he was silent, and his eyes were bent forward upon the dark form crouching in the bows of the life-boat.

He looked out over the storm-swept waters, but nowhere saw the schooner.

He could only hold on, and on reaching the other shore land in the surf.

But soon the moon broke through the clouds, the storm had spent its force, and the life-boat was put back for the Belle Eden shore.

Frank Bestor knew that she could not make much headway, and he only wished to keep from going further away, to end the suspense of the mother for her child as soon as it was possible to do so.

Then the moon came out in all its beauty, and far off over the waters the sails of the schooner were visible glimmering in the silvery light.

She has headed back for Belle Eden, and Don Moro will surely then come out to pick us up, so do not feel any anxiety, Estelle."

"I do not, and I have not since—since that gentleman came to my rescue."

She glanced timidly toward the bow of the boat, where Shannon Vere sat, his face turned from them.

Frank Bestor said no more, but watched the schooner, which soon after was seen to put out from Belle Eden and head toward them.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SAFE.

THE yacht came swiftly on, the Don having taken the bearings of the spot where the life-boat had left the schooner, and then noted the direction of the storm, so that he knew about where to search for the missing ones.

He had no fear for Frank Bestor in the life-boat—in his heart he only wished that he would be drowned; but he did have a dread that Estelle had not been found, and he knew who it was that had gone to her rescue.

He hoped that Shannon Vere might also be drowned, and he expected that he had been.

With Bestor out of the way, Vere gone, and Gordon Grayhurst dead on a barren island, he would have nothing to fear.

"I can make the widow my wife, and then all will be well," he muttered, and he was dreaming over future triumphs, when a cry from the African lookout told him that the life-boat was in sight.

He soon discerned her white sides gleaming in the moonlight as she rose on a wave.

"She is coming toward us."

"Now to know the result!" he muttered.

He turned his glass upon the boat, and after a long look, said:

"He has saved them."

"Bestor is the only man who would have dared do what he did."

It was not very long before across the waters came the hail:

"Sea Shell, ahoy!"

The voice rung out like a bugle, and the Don knew that it was Frank Bestor that hailed.

"Ahoy the life-boat! What success?" shouted back the Don.

"All safe! Come to and I will come up under your lee."

The Sea Shell was soon laying to, and a few moments after Estelle was on the deck of the schooner, and was hurried into the cabin by the Don, where a glass of wine was given her and a wrap thrown over her wet clothing.

Shannon Vere had followed silently, and leav-

ing his crew to haul the boat up to the davits, Bestor followed.

He at once stepped up to the rescuer of Estelle and took his hand, while he said:

"My dear Mr. Vere, let me congratulate you upon your magnificent courage and noble deed this night."

"But for you Estelle Grayburst would now be dead, and your own conscience must repay you for your deed."

Shannon Vere was deeply affected, but returned the grasp of the sailor's hand, while he said, his own voice betraying his emotion:

"I but did my duty, sir; but need she know who it was that saved her?"

"She does know."

"Ah! I am sorry; but may my act to-night in part atone for the—the—past."

Then he added basitly:

"But for you, Captain Bestor, I would have lost my life also: we both would have perished."

"Let us be friends in reality, not foes at heart."

"I am more than willing, Mr. Vere; but here comes the Don, and you must go into the cabin and change your clothes, also taking a glass of brandy, for you are chilled."

"No, no, I would rather not."

The Don approached and said:

"Pardon me, Vere, for deserting you, but I was anxious to look after Miss Estelle, who wishes to see you, so bring him along, Bestor."

"But, Vere, you have acted nobly to-night, and you, Bestor, did just what I knew you would."

"Come, Miss Estelle wishes you to come and see her."

Shannon Vere hung back, and said firmly:

"No! no! she deems herself compelled to thank me for what I did."

"Let her mother be the one, if she feels that she must, for Miss Grayhurst is so young she may be governed by impulse."

"Captain Bestor, we are nearly opposite my home, so I beg of you to let me be sent ashore, for I will not meet her."

They saw that he was in earnest, so the schooner was brought up into the wind, the cutter launched, and the oarsmen told to take Mr. Vere home and then to run up to Belle Eden and join the Sea Shell.

As the young planter took his seat in the cutter, the oarsmen let fall their oars and just then there glided up to the bulwark Estelle Grayburst.

She saw that her rescuer was leaving, that he would not come near her, and she said, earnestly:

"Good-by, Mr. Vere, and God bless you."

They were simple, touching words, and he bent low in recognition; but he uttered no word and was rowed rapidly away over the waters.

The schooner held on her way and soon after glided alongside the wharf at Belle Eden.

Enveloped in the wrap which the Don had thrown about her, Estelle went ashore escorted by both Don Moro and Bestor.

Lights glanced in the mansion, but not a soul met them.

Mrs. Grayhurst had been told of the coming of the Sea Shell, but she would allow no one to go to know the result.

"Let me live in hope to the last," she had said.

She heard the coming steps, and another moment she would know the worst, or the best.

Then she heard a clear, musical voice, and recognizing the tones she said:

"Heaven, I thank Thee!"

She sprang to her feet, reeled as though about to fall, but recovering herself, rushed forward and the next moment clasped Estelle in her arms.

It was a touching meeting, and even the stern face of Don Moro seemed to soften as he beheld the mother and daughter.

Then Mrs. Grayhurst begged the Don and Bestor to remain, while she hurried Estelle away to her room to put on dry clothes, and half an hour after she returned to the library.

Her face was pale, her brow clouded, and she bade the others, those who had remained with her, good-night, in a constrained sort of manner.

When the carriages rolled away, Mrs. Grayhurst went to the library.

"Captain Bestor," and she walked up and took both his hands in hers:

"I owe you more than a life of gratitude can ever repay, for I owe to you the life of my child, who, had she been taken from me I would have longed for death."

"My dear Mrs. Grayhurst, I simply did my duty, with no risk to myself, and which I could not have done, however, but for the presence on board of Don Juan Moro, who is entitled to equally as much credit as myself."

"I well know how ably Don Moro seconded you, and he knows that my heart overflows with gratitude to him too; but you risked life to go to Estelle's aid, and—"

"Let me tell you, my dear madam, that the life-boat would live in any sea, and your thanks are not due to me, but to the one to whom your daughter really owes her life."

"Has she not told you?"

"She has told me nothing, for I would hardly let her speak, so anxious was I about her."

Frank Bestor looked toward the Don, but he preferred that the young man should break the news, so said:

"As Mrs. Grayhurst is in ignorance to whom her daughter owes her life, Bestor, you had better at once let her know."

At his words Mrs. Grayhurst stood gazing in surprise from one to the other of the two, and she said earnestly:

"There seems to be some mystery to explain. I beg you to let me know all, Captain Bestor."

CHAPTER XLV.

FORGIVEN, BUT UNFORGOTTEN.

THUS urged by Mrs. Grayhurst, Frank Bestor felt that he must at once make known to her that the part he had played in the rescue of Estelle was but a secondary one.

He remembered that Mrs. Grayhurst had swooned when her daughter was swept into the sea, and if she had been told that other than he had gone to her rescue, it had escaped her mind.

As Estelle had not told her, he felt that the young girl had shrunk from doing so, and at once putting a damper upon her mother's joy at her rescue.

So he said:

"Mrs. Grayhurst, when the wave boarded us that swept Miss Estelle into the sea, I was forward, and Don Moro not near her, or perhaps she might have been prevented from going overboard.

"But there was one who saw her danger and boldly sprung into the seething waters after her."

"Yes, one of your brave Sea Savages, and he shall be remembered most generously, I assure you, Captain Bestor."

"It was thought at the time, Mrs. Grayhurst, that it was one of my Sea Savages, but such proved not to be the case."

"Indeed? and who could it have been?" asked the lady with intense surprise.

"It was one of the guests on board, one who saw certain death to Miss Estelle without aid, and yet one who knew that such aid could only be at the risk of the rescuer's life.

"With almost certain death before him, he followed her quickly into the surging waters, her white dress guided him, and he grasped her in his strong arms and upheld her.

"He is a bold swimmer, having few equals, and well for both of them was it that such was the case.

"His brave words cheered her, his strong arm upheld her, and he had her safe, for if no boat came to the rescue they could reach the other shore, and I almost believe he could have done so.

"She urged him to leave her and save himself; but his answer was that he would save her or perish with her.

"This she told me, for he had nothing to say."

"At last I heard a hail, and was guided to them, and soon they were in the life-boat.

"It seemed to me for an instant that he was willing to drop back and seek no aid offered him; but the men dragged him into the life-boat and he crouched down forward, his face turned over the bow.

"But just then a vivid glare of lightning revealed who he was, and I saw that Miss Estelle, for the first time recognized her preserver.

"There he crouched in the bows, until we reached the schooner, and then Miss Estelle sent the Don to bid him come to her.

"He refused and urged me to land him at his home, which I did, for he said he would not place Miss Estelle under the duty, as she felt it, of meeting him face to face."

Frank Bestor had spoken in a low, earnest voice, and he saw by the expression on Mrs. Grayhurst face that she began to suspect who the rescuer had been, and why he withheld his name.

When he ceased speaking she arose and approaching him said:

"Then it is to Mr. Shannon Vere that my child owes her life?"

"It is, madam."

"He risked his life to take that of my husband, and he has faced death to save my child."

"May God help me to decide!"

"Can one act atone for the other?"

"Can the saving of her life, wipe the stain of her father's blood from his hands?"

Mrs Grayhurst was deeply, painfully moved.

Her face was convulsed with the anguish she felt, and she stood with clasped hands and head upraised, as though seeking response from Heaven.

Just then Estelle glided to the door.

She looked very beautiful, with her long hair hanging far down her back, and dressed in a pretty white robe.

The two men saw her, the mother did not.

She had heard her mother's words, which were almost a prayer.

Quickly she glided forward and placed her

arms around her neck and laid her head upon her bosom.

"Mother, he saved me to atone for the past, I am sure."

"But for him I would be dead, and he gave me my life for the live he had taken."

"Forgive, if you cannot forget, for Heaven has given me strength to do so."

The appeal was a touching one, and the mother said passionately:

"Yes, I forgive him! but Great God! I can never forget!"

Then Frank Bestor moved forward and said:

"Had he saved her with the air of a bravo, to seek applause, I would say nothing in his favor; but he did not: he acted as though he wished to risk his own life, and when his brave deed was done, he crouched down in the bows away from Estelle, and refused to see her unless he saw her in your presence."

"He did what he did as an atonement, and I feel that he feels happier this night than he has for many a long day."

"And I too would say a word in his favor, and reward you, my dear madam, that when that sad affair occurred, Mr. Vere offered an alternative, which was not accepted by Mr. Grayhurst, so let that also plead for him as a mitigation."

"I have said that I forgive, but I cannot forget."

"Captain Bestor, as we were your guests, I ask you to bring Mr. Vere to call to-morrow, that I may personally thank him, and then—after I have done that, and Estelle—we need be only—only acquaintances—that is all—may it not be so?"

She spoke excitedly, and Frank Bestor ventured to say:

"Certainly, madam, and if I judge Mr. Vere aright, you will not find him a man to intrude upon your gratitude on account of his act."

"And I too will vouch for that," heartily said the Don.

"Now, gentlemen, come in to supper, for I know Estelle is hungry," and the party adjourned to the dining-room.

It was very late when the Don and Bestor left, the former driving home in his carriage, and the latter sailing back to Hope Haven in the Sea Shell over the moonlit waters, lately lashed into fury under the tempest which had so nearly brought on a fatal ending to the pleasant affair at the home of the young sailor.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE ORDEAL.

SHANNON VERE was pacing to and fro, upon the broad piazza of his house, the morning after the scenes related in the last chapter, when his eyes fell upon a sail standing in toward his anchorage.

"It is the Sea Shell," he said, recognizing the armed yacht of Frank Bestor.

"Why is he coming here, for he certainly is heading for my anchorage," he mused.

The face of the young planter wore a more cheerful look than was its wont.

He looked like one who had taken a load off his conscience.

As he saw the Sea Shell drop anchor and a boat come ashore he leveled a spy-glass he took down from a bracket and said:

"It is Bestor."

"I will meet him."

Taking his bat from the hall he strode down the steps and took the walk toward the cove.

Frank Bestor met him half way and greeted him warmly, after which he said:

"Vere, Mrs. Grayhurst did not know until I told her late last night, who it was that had rescued her daughter."

"I wish she had never known it, for my recompense is in having saved her."

"But she does know, and she asked me, with no request, or urging from either Don Moro or myself, to come and bring you with me to-day to Belle Eden."

"No! no! no!"

"Yes, you must go with me, my dear friend, for you cannot do otherwise."

"She expects you, she will show how deeply she feels your act, and then let the matter end in a speaking acquaintance, for it will be better for you and for them."

"Far better; but must I go?"

"You must."

"I am in your hands, Captain Bestor."

"Then come with me."

"Let me return to the house and change my toilet."

In a short while he was ready, and going on board the Sea Shell, the fleet vessel set sail for Belle Eden.

Mrs. Grayhurst was seated in the library, writing a letter to Gordon, telling him all that had occurred, and Estelle, looking very beautiful, and none the worse for her adventure of the night before, was sketching bits of marine that were visible from the window.

Suddenly across the marine view glided the Sea Shell, and springing to her feet, Estelle cried:

"Oh, mamma! there is the Sea Shell."

The face of Mrs. Grayhurst darkened.

She knew that the yacht came for a purpose.

That purpose was to bring Shannon Vere across the threshold of her home.

She arose, and, with Estelle, sought their room to change their toilet, for they were in morning robes.

"Show the gentlemen into the parlor," she had said to the butler, with an emphasis upon the word *parlor*.

Soon after Frank Bestor and Shannon Vere crossed the threshold of Belle Eden.

The young planter was perfectly calm, but very pale.

The sailor would have turned into the library, but the negro said:

"Into de parlor missus said I was to show massas."

So he entered the parlor, followed by Shannon Vere.

The latter stepped forward into the grand parlors, his eye taking in the rich furniture, and the air of refinement and wealth that was visible all about him.

But suddenly he started, drew back, and said hoarsely:

"No, no, Bestor, not in here!"

Frank Bestor saw what he meant.

There, before him over the mantle, was a life-size portrait of the dead master of Belle Eden.

He was face to face with the very image of the man he had slain.

The likeness was a perfect one, exactly life-size, and he stood with one hand thrust into his coat, the other holding his hat as he looked straight into the face of his slayer.

By a strange, a cruel coincidence it seemed, the portrait had been painted by the artist in the very suit the dead man had worn the day of his fatal duel with Shannon.

Was it refined cruelty in the widow to ask her visitor into the parlor?

Who can tell?

But after the first start, Shannon Vere was himself again.

If he had been intentionally invited into the parlor, he forgave the woman.

If she had asked him there to show that she could the more readily forgive before that living likeness of the dead, then he thanked her.

But he was himself again in an instant, and Frank Bestor could not but admire the splendid pluck of the man who stood gazing at the portrait and remarked:

"It is a perfect likeness, Bestor, and just as he looked on the day of the duel.

"Who is the artist, I wonder?" and he stepped forward and glanced at the name beneath.

"By Neptune! but that fellow has grit," mused Bestor, and he turned as the rustle of a dress was heard in the hall.

It was the widow.

She entered the door directly opposite to the portrait, and her eyes fell first upon it.

Then she advanced toward Frank Bestor and said:

"I am glad to see you, Captain Bestor, and I thank you for having brought Mr. Vere to Belle Eden, that I may tell him the debt of gratitude I owe him, that I may thank him from the depths of a mother's heart for his noble rescue of my child, but feel that his deepest recompence lies in his own breast."

She bad showed no sign of emotion other than in her voice.

She watched the man in coolness, and only hesitated when she put forth her hand to take his.

He, too, had hesitated an instant, and then, with a sudden impulse, which Bestor had noted, had offered his left hand!

The face of the woman flushed at this, and she saw and appreciated his act, and she took the hand in both her own and pressed it, as he said, with perfect coolness:

"You say aright, Mrs. Grayhurst, your gratitude I appreciate; but my recompence lies in my own heart."

At this moment Estelle entered, and the scene was broken for an instant.

"Dear Captain Bestor, I am so glad you have come, and it was so good of you to bring Mr. Vere to let me tell him how well I know that but for his bravery I would now be dead."

She paused an instant, and her lip quivered; but she resumed quickly:

"But what a superb swimmer you are, Mr. Vere; I had no idea that one could swim as you can."

The sudden change of conversation broke the painful scene, and all seemed more at their ease, and various topics were talked over until Shannon Vere arose to go.

"You will have a glass of wine with us, Mr. Vere?" said Mrs. Grayhurst.

This proved that the widow had forgiven, and the wine was brought and drank simply to the good health of all present. Shannon Vere only touching his lips to his glass.

Involuntarily the eyes of the young planter were raised to the portrait, as they had often before cast stealthy glances upon it.

Mrs. Grayhurst saw the glance.

Was it to show that she had forgiven the slayer of her dead, and could speak of him before those who had killed him, or was it a secret revenge that caused her to say:

"You are looking at the portrait of my late husband, Mr. Vere."

"It is a most perfect likeness, as all deem it." Frank Bestor started at her words, for he deemed them cruel, and Estelle's face paled and a look of intense grief swept over it, as she glanced quickly at the young planter.

But Shannon Vere was equal to the occasion. He did not change color, and not a muscle of his face moved, as he replied in a firm, distinct voice:

"The likeness is a perfect one, Mrs. Grayburst, and just as I recall your husband's splendid, noble face."

Frank Bestor gave a sigh of relief, which was echoed by Estelle, and the two gentlemen took their leave, with no request from Mrs. Grayburst to Shannon Vere to call again.

Both understood that there was to be no friendship between a Vere and the Graybursts.

As they passed out of the door Mrs. Grayburst tottered to a sofa and fell in a swoon, for her nerves had been taxed beyond her strength.

Estelle hastily called for aid, and her mother quickly revived, and murmured:

"Thank God, the ordeal is over."

"Estelle, at heart, Shannon Vere is not a wicked man."

CHAPTER XLVII.

SUSPENSE.

THERE was one thing that cast a gloom over Belle Eden, and that was that although Gordon had been gone for a long while not a line had come from him of his arrival on the other side of the Atlantic.

That no letter came the reader can understand, and also Don Moro knew; but there was so one else on the shores of Bay St. Louis who could explain the reason for not hearing.

Seeing how worried Mrs. Grayburst was becoming, Frank Bestor ran over to New Orleans in the Sea Shell, and made inquiries of the agents of the brig in which Gordon had sailed.

He found that no word had been received by them of the safe arrival of the brig in London, and they, too, were anxious as to her fate; but they told him that the captain owned his own vessel and cargo, and had intended to take freights where he could secure them, so might have at once sailed for some other country.

"But he would have written you."

"He promised to do so immediately upon his arrival, but he may have forgotten it."

"He has been gone now for over three months?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, if you get word, send a messenger in a boat at once to Hope Haven Plantation, Bay St. Louis, and I will pay all expenses."

The agent promised to do so, and Frank Bestor returned home to report, hoping that he would find a letter had arrived from Gordon meanwhile.

But none had been received by the anxious mother, whose suspense grew greater and greater each day.

The second week after Bestor's visit to the agent, a sail-boat ran in to the Hope Haven anchorage, and one of the two men on board walked rapidly up to the mansion.

Bestor met him at the door, for he had seen his coming, and suspected his mission.

The man handed him a letter, which read:

"DEAR SIR:--

"We hasten to inform you that the clipper ship Vixen has just arrived, after an unprecedented run, having left London on the 6th of this month, and her captain, who knew the brig and her command well, reports that she had not arrived in port when he departed, nor had she been reported as seen by any outgoing or incoming vessels."

"We really fear that the brig was lost in the continuous severe weather that followed her sailing from this port, but we still hope that she may turn up all right."

"Any news that we may receive shall be at once sent to you."

"Your obedient servants,

"RICHARD W. SALTER & CO.
"New Orleans."

The man who brought the letter was liberally paid by Bestor, who returned an answer to the agents.

"Should other news come, my man, be sure and bring me word with all haste and I will pay you well."

Thus urged the messenger set off for his return, hoping to get other news to bring back.

Frank Bestor was compelled to report the letter of Richard Salter & Co., to Mrs. Grayburst.

"Can it be that after all he is lost?"

"No, no, I will not believe it," she said.

Another week brought the messenger again to Hope Haven with another letter.

It said:

"The West Indian brig Vulture arrived this morning from an extended cruise, and brought with her a boat picked up at sea bearing the brig's name, and which we recognize as having belonged to the missing vessel."

"There are shot marks in the boat's gunwale, which would indicate the brig had been in action with some vessel-of-war, or a pirate."

"The captain of the West Indian vessel says he

found the boat on his way out, not very far from Abaco, the Hole in the Wall, among the Bahamas.

"We fear we will never hear more of the brig, and our deepest sympathies are with the poor lady who mourns the loss of her son."

"Yours obediently,
SALTER & CO.

"Expect more if we hear more."

With this letter Frank Bestor went over to see the Don.

They had a talk together, and the opinion expressed by the master of Moro Castle was to the effect that the brig had been captured by West Indian pirates and her crew put to death.

"I fear you are right, Don; but I still believe she is afloat, though perhaps a wreck."

"I cannot believe the boy is dead, so I will run over to England and see for myself," said Frank Bestor.

"It will be useless, I fear; but I am going over to New Orleans, so will see the skipper of every vessel lately arrived and try and learn something."

"You will hardly start before my return?"

"Hardly."

But when Frank Bestor made known to Mrs. Grayburst and Estelle the news he had, and saw their deep grief, he said:

"Do not give up, I beg of you, but hope, for I shall leave at once for England on the search for the brig."

"Captain Bestor, you are a noble friend; but oh! what a trouble we are to you," said Mrs. Grayburst.

"No, no, on the contrary you have done far more for me than you can ever know," was the reply, and Frank Bestor asked the loan of a horse to ride into town and order needed stores for the Sea Shell on her cruise.

He had just ordered the necessary stores and was mounting his horse to return to Belle Eden, when Shannon Vere rode up and joined him.

"Captain Bestor, I am deeply pained to learn that there is a fear of the loss of Gordon Grayburst," he said.

"There is much fear, and with such good reason, Vere, that I have just ordered supplies for my vessel, which will run over to-night and take them on board, so that I can start at once on the search for the brig."

"Captain Bestor, dare I ask you to let me accompany you?"

"I am something of a sailor, I believe you know, and I would be willing to serve you in any way."

Frank Bestor hesitated, but only for an instant, when he said:

"Vere, I will be more than glad to have you go, for you know I have only my crew of Sea Savages, and your courage and advice will be of service to me, I well know."

"Can you be ready to start to-night?"

"Within the hour if need be."

"I will go at once and arrange affairs at home, place an overseer in charge, and meet you at the village to-night when you come over for your stores," and the young planter rode off in glad mood at the prospect of the cruise.

Frank Bestor returned to Belle Eden and remained to dinner at Mrs. Grayburst's urgent request.

"Please say to Don Moro, Mrs. Grayburst, that I determined not to await his return, so started at once."

"I will do so, and I thank you for not delaying, as you are so good as to go."

"And Mrs. Grayburst, I wish to tell you that I accepted the kind offer of Shannon Vere to accompany me."

"Shannon Vere?" she faltered.

"Yes, he made the offer in good faith, and I need just such a daring ally as he will be."

"You know best, and I feel that he will indeed aid you greatly."

Soon after dinner farewells were said and Frank Bestor left Belle Eden to go upon the most eventful voyage of his strange life of adventure.

He had sailed over in his little cat-rigged boat, and went flying back across the bay to prepare for his cruise.

The Sea Shell was in perfect trim, and it did not take him long to pack up, place the mansion in charge of his faithful servants and, with his three-score Sea Savages on board head for the anchorage off the town, where his supplies were awaiting him.

Shannon Vere was there with his baggage, and by midnight the Sea Shell was flying along under full sail toward the blue waters of the Mexican Gulf.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE BUCCANEER BRIG.

A VESSEL was flying along over the waters of the Gulf Stream, bound on a run to a Southern climate.

She had cleared from Boston, and her destination was Havana.

The vessel was a brig, and an American packet, fitted up in luxurious style as a passenger carrier.

She was a fine craft from keel to truck, and swept along under full sail at a rate that got ten knots an hour of an eight-knot breeze.

The coast of Florida lay off on the starboard

beam some two leagues, and the passengers on deck were regretting that they had not a closer view of the land of flowers, for having come from the cold land of the north, and been some weeks at sea, they were more than anxious to get ashore.

Upon the deck were perhaps half a score of passengers, over half of which were ladies.

The captain of the packet was there with his mates, and his crew of thirty men were at their posts, if on watch, or lolling about the decks forward if off duty.

Among the passengers were three persons in one group, an elderly gentleman and lady, and a young and beautiful woman who could scarcely be over twenty-two.

The reader has met the latter before, for she is none other than Miriam Vance, of Sea Cliffs, on the Massachusetts Coast.

After the sailing of Frank Bestor, the night of his last visit to his old home, Miriam had seemed to feel some secret sorrow, and her physician prescribed a change of scene.

She had a cousin living in Boston, so wrote to ask if she could come and visit her home.

An immediate answer was returned, saying Mrs. Lowndes had been ordered by her physician to spend the winter in a southern climate, and she and her husband were to sail in ten days, but they would be delighted to have Miriam accompany them.

Instantly her mind was made up and the next day she started for Boston.

Mr. Adam Lowndes was a retired merchant, and childless, and they had always been fond of Miriam, who had lived with them when at school in Boston.

As they were elderly people she had called them Uncle and Auntie, and she was greatly attached to both of them.

So when the fine Packet Brig Coquette sailed for Havana she had as passengers Mr. and Mrs. Lourdes and Mrs. Miriam Vance.

Captain Chase, a courtly old sailor, fell in love with Miriam at sight, and was most attentive to her, as well as to her relatives, for Mr. Lowndes was half-owner in the vessel.

Driven off their course by a gale, they were much nearer the Florida Coast than the captain liked, but his passengers were glad of the circumstance as it gave them a sight of land.

The Coquette bowled merrily along until near sunset, when suddenly out of the shadows of the land came a vessel.

Captain Chase well knew that he was in a dangerous locality.

He instantly seized his glass and leveled it at the stranger.

"It is a brig and an armed one at that."

"Doubtless an American cruiser hunting along shore for pirates."

So he said to Miriam who stood near him.

But Captain Chase at once ordered more sail set, and the helmsman to head off a point or two from the shore.

The Coquette minded her helm beautifully, and her speed increased under her extra sail.

But the vessel that had been sighted, at once became crowded with sail, and seemed to fairly dart along in pursuit.

Captain Chase knew that his craft was a fleet one, but he was soon convinced that the stranger showed remarkable speed.

The American flag was floating at the peak of the stranger, and Captain Chase hoped that she was not flying false colors.

He hoped this the more when he saw that the stranger was gaining upon the Coquette.

He did all in his power to add to his own craft's speed, and soon saw that she was doing her best.

"The Coquette can do no more," he muttered, as he eagerly watched the pursuer.

But his face grew a trifle anxious as he saw that the stranger steadily gained, fast as was his brig.

The stranger was not a league away, and soon after came a shot from her bows.

As the iron messenger came flying along toward the brig, an exclamation broke from a score of lips on the decks of the Coquette.

"See her flag, Chase!"

So had said Mr. Lowndes. But Captain Chase had already seen it.

The flag was as black as ink, and in its center was a device but too well known to belong to the fraternity of Red Rovers.

Captain Chase was a brave man; but his face paled when he glanced toward his lady passengers.

Men could die with arms in their hands, but women were helpless in battle, and scenes of carnage should never greet their eyes.

The sun was near its setting, and as it sunk toward the horizon, the wind seemed to be failing.

Again came a shot from the brig in chase, and as the practice improved and the iron balls began to drop dangerously near, the commander of the Coquette said:

"Mr. Lowndes, will you please see the ladies into the cabin, and they must not expose themselves at the stern ports."

"Gentlemen, we must fight yonder fellow, if it comes to it, and I have weapons for you."

The last was addressed to the male passengers,

who, to a man at once offered their services to aid in the defense of the brig.

"Well, Mr. Lowndes, we can number twenty-six seamen, two mates, five passengers, a cook, two stewards and a captain, thirty-seven all told, which is by no means a small showing for a fight," said the captain cheerfully, as Mr. Lowndes joined him on the deck.

"Not a bad showing I admit, Chase; but yonder craft I examined closely, and she is fully as large as the Coquette and carries a battery of seven guns to a side, not to speak of the pivot-piece she has mounted upon her forecastle, and her decks are crowded with men, fully a hundred, I should say."

"True, but we must fight them."

"Now I get a better look at the craft I take it she is the brig of Carlos the Corsair, a Cuban outlaw who has just begun to be a terror in West Indian waters."

"I have heard captains speak of him lately; but we must try and beat him off, if he will not take ransom and go on his way."

"We shall see," was the response of the captain; but his face wore an anxious look as he glanced toward the buccaneer brig.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A CALM BEFORE A STORM.

THE buccaneer brig came on as though she was sure of her prey.

Her men were seen to be at their guns, and she was crowded with sail, and her speed was something remarkable, for though the Coquette was fleet she overhauled her rapidly.

As twilight fell the wind died away, and when darkness came the brig was becalmed upon the waters.

The buccaneer seemed to be favored with the breeze a short while longer, for when she became becalmed she was not more than a mile away from the Coquette.

The sails of both vessels were left up, as though to woo the breeze; but as soon as the Coquette ceased to move through the waters Mr. Lowndes held a conversation with her captain.

"Chase, we have but a few men to resist that fellow with, and it would be best to temporize."

"It we can."

"On account of the ladies we must."

"How we!"

"Send a boat with one of your mates at once on board the buccaneer, and authorize him to say, as there are lady passengers on board the Coquette we will pay her value in gold if permitted to go on her way."

"I will send the man, yes, go myself; but I fear he will want heavier ransom than the value of the brig."

"If necessary it must be given, for I will pay a large sum besides giving my half of the brig, the other passengers will subscribe liberally no doubt, and we can make up an amount not to be refused even by a pirate."

"I will go at once, for my idea is if the wind don't spring up soon he will attack us in his boats."

So saying, the captain called for four volunteer oarsmen to row him to the buccaneer craft, while Mr. Lowndes called a meeting of the passengers and a handsome ransom was soon subscribed, Miriam Vance saying coolly:

"Put me down, uncle, for any sum you may need, for I am amply able to pay, and will gladly do so."

The captain soon after pulled toward the brig.

He carried a lantern in the bow of his boat so as to attract attention, and when yet a long way off from the buccaneer hailed:

"Brig ahoy!"

"Ahoy the boat!" came in fair English.

"What brig is that?"

"The Sea Hound, Captain Carlos the Buccaneer, commander," was the response.

"Ay, ay; I wish to come on board and see Captain Carlos."

"What boat is that?"

"From the American packet brig, Coquette, from Boston to Havana bound."

"What is your business with Captain Carlos?"

"To pay ransom for my brig and let her go on her way."

"You have passengers on board?"

"Yes."

"What crew?"

"I decline to say."

"What number of passengers?"

"I decline to state," answered Captain Chase, not willing to let the buccaneer know what force he had.

"What is your cargo?"

"General merchandise."

"Is your craft a new one?"

"Comparatively."

"Well, what ransom do you offer?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

A mocking laugh from on board the brig was the response.

"Is it not enough?"

"No."

"What do you demand?"

"Three times that sum."

"Suppose I pay it?"

"How?"

"In gold drafts on Havana."

"I guess we won't trade."

"I can give you half the sum in gold."

"No, I prefer to get half the sum, the brig and cargo as well, and ransoms from the passengers."

"But, Senor Captain—"

"Silence, and go back to your brig, or I will fire on you."

"Do you intend to attack me?"

"Fire!"

A red glare burst from the side of the buccaneer craft, and a shot flew over the boat.

"Pull back to the brig, lads."

"We must fight him to the end."

The men pulled with a will back to the Coquette, and when he ascended the gangway, Mr. Lowndes saw that Captain Chase had no good news to tell him.

"He would not let me come alongside, and refused my offer."

"What did you offer him?"

"Ten thousand at first, and then he demanded thirty."

"You should have granted it, Chase."

"Egad! I did; but then he said he preferred the thirty thousand, along with the brig, her cargo, and what ransom he could make the passengers pay."

"The devil! I know of but one thing we can do, Chase."

"Fight him?"

"Yes."

"I hope he will attack in his boats."

"But we must get ready."

"Yes, at once."

The brig carried four guns of small caliber, and these were at once double-shotted with grape, the muskets were loaded, the boarding pikes placed ready for use, along with the cutlasses and small-arms.

Mr. Lowndes was to command a reserve of the passengers, the cook and stewards, the mates were to take charge of the guns, and Captain Chase was to be ready with his men to beat off boarders, and to overlook all.

When all was in readiness they could but await the attack.

The calm continued, and Captain Chase was glad that it was so, as it would force the pirates to attack in their boats.

The pirate could not be seen in the darkness, but it was known but too well that he was there, and even then was plotting mischief.

In the cabin the ladies were calm, but anxious, for women, in moments of great danger and suffering, always show a nerve that puts many men to shame.

Miriam, though pale, talked cheerfully, to revive the drooping spirits of all, and her aunt was perfectly calm, though dreading the worst.

"I fear my asking you to come with us, dear Miriam, will turn out sadly for you," said Mrs. Lowndes, with a sad smile.

"Do not speak of that, auntie, for I was glad to come, so you cannot blame yourself for acting for my good."

"We are not captured yet, and may not be, for we have defenders, if they are few in number," was the brave response.

Then Mr. Lowndes entered the cabin to say that the pirates were coming, and in their boats.

"Keep up courage, all of you, for we are prepared for them," he said, and kissing his wife and Miriam, without trusting himself to say more, he returned to the deck.

He had been gone but a few moments, when all in the cabin heard Captain Chase call out:

"Ahoy there, boats! Keep off or take the consequences!"

A yell came from out upon the waters, and then the brig quivered from stem to stern as the guns poured forth their fire, followed by a rattle of musketry.

CHAPTER L.

THE SEA SHELL'S CRUISE.

WHEN the Sea Shell sailed on her cruise in search of the brig which had taken Gordon Grayhurst as a passenger, Frank Bestor was determined to start at the beginning, so to speak.

The brig had not been spoken on the voyage, or at least had not been reported by any vessel, as far as could be learned, and, as her boat had been picked up in southern seas, it was to be surmised that whether she had been captured by pirates, or foundered in a storm at sea, it had been before she had gone very far upon her voyage outside of the Gulf.

The fact that the boat which had been picked up had been found with shot holes in it indicated to the mind of Frank Bestor that the brig had been attacked by an armed vessel, and no one better than he knew that the pirates of the West Indies were wont toounce upon vessels in the very course that the English-bound craft would have been in.

He had gotten the locality of the finding of the boat, so headed for that point.

The Sea Shell was in trim to meet a foe, and with the papers given him by the President, Bestor felt at liberty to cruise where he pleased in search of a lost vessel or to find a buccaneer.

He had perfect confidence in his crew of Sea

Savages, and knew that, as long as he lived, they would fight to the end.

They were fearless, utterly so, thoroughly disciplined, handled the guns as well as they did the vessel, and Bestor had added to his battery of three large pivot guns four twelve-pounders, which gave him a broadside of five pieces.

He had sixty men in crew, every one of them magnificent specimens of African manhood, tall, muscular, active as cats and strong and fierce as tigers when aroused.

Shannon Vere had proven himself an invaluable ally from the first.

The Sea Savages had seen his brave act in the rescue of Estelle, and they took to him at once.

He set to work to learn their language, and under the tuition of Bestor, Molok and the others, he got on marvelously well, while the Sea Savages had begun to pick up considerable English, though they allowed their master only to know this fact.

The Sea Shell, after running out of the Bay St. Louis, had headed into the Gulf, and then shaped her course so as to sight Key West.

The winds were baffling, but the schooner made fair time, and dropped Key West astern, heading for the Bahamas.

After a short cruise among the islands, Bestor determined to run up the Florida Coast, and one day put inshore to fill his water casks at a large spring which he knew the existence of from having landed there on a like mission when serving with Pierre the Pirate.

He had run his vessel into a lagoon, and determined to give the crew a day ashore, after having filled the water-casks.

Night came on before he had towed out of the lagoon, so he decided to anchor until morning, and, seated in the cabin chatting with Shannon Vere, to whom he had become much attached, they were startled by hearing a heavy gun fired at a distance out at sea.

Instantly the two were on deck, the boats were gotten out ahead, and the schooner was towed toward the mouth of the lagoon.

Before reaching it there came two heavy shot and the rattle of musketry.

There was not a breath of air stirring, so the anchor was let fall, the men were armed, and two boats started to the rescue, Bestor in one, Shannon Vere in the other, and twenty men in each.

Frank Bestor felt assured that some pirate craft had attacked a merchantman.

His glass showed him an armed brig up the coast, and directly opposite the lagoon another brig, where the flashing guns revealed a fierce fight going on.

The Sea Savages pulled with a will, and soon were alongside the brig.

They were not a moment too soon, for the pirates had not only gained a footing on the deck forward, but had driven the defenders of the brig to a last stand aft at the quarter-deck.

The brig's crew had been cut down to half their force, and a number of them were wounded; but though the pirates had suffered heavily they were really masters of the vessel, as a short struggle more and the unequal combat must end.

The captain of the brig had been twice wounded, neither time seriously, however, and yet he fought like a tiger.

Mr. Lowndes had fought with marked courage, for he knew all that he fought for, and yet had thus far escaped a wound.

With a wild yell the pirates formed for a rush which would end the struggle.

But their yell was answered by cries so loud, so wild, fierce and appalling that the pirates and the brig's defenders were almost paralyzed with terror and amazement.

Then, naked to the waist, bare-footed, with white pants and blood-red caps, their black bodies and faces seeming demoniacal, the Sea Savages rushed up the deck.

At their head were two tall forms in uniforms, and in a strange tongue rung out the command of Frank Bestor:

"At them you Lions of the Sea!"

Their rush was irresistible, and the pirates went down like grass before a scythe.

The defenders of the brig, in fright, fell back to the cabin companionway, more of them darting down it in their terror and stating that they were overwhelmed by black demons.

But loud rung the order:

"Pirates you are my game!"

"Death to buccaneers."

"That's the music I love to hear," yelled Captain Chase and he sprung again into the fight to attack the pirates.

CHAPTER LI.

SEA SAVAGES AHOY!

THE cries of the Sea Savages, with the ringing voice of Frank Bestor and the clear tones of Shannon Vere shouting:

"Sea Savages ahoy! ahoy!" soon ended the combat.

The pirates had never fought black demons before, for such they believed the African crew, and, when unable to stay their wild rush, they had sprung overboard into the sea.

Some had gained their boats, but in an instant

Frank Bestor was in hot pursuit and a running fire was kept up.

"Take charge of the brig, Vere," he had shouted to his lieutenant, and a word had told half a score of blacks to remain with him.

The balance, in the schooner's two boats had pursued the flying pirates.

Hardly had they disappeared in the darkness, before Shannon Vere had charge of the deck.

The wounded pirates had been hastily dragged forward and guarded, and then advancing aft Shannon Vere was met by Captain Chase, who had now the battle lantern to light the deck.

With the captain was Mr. Lowndes, and behind him the remnant of the brig's crew.

Back of these were the lady passengers, who had come on deck since the firing ceased and they had been told that the brig was safe.

Behind Shannon Vere were the Sea Savages, upright, silent and standing like statues of black marble, their weapons in their hands.

Still further forward lay the mass of dead and beyond were the wounded, over whom stood two Sea Savages.

It was a weird, a striking picture, that deck of the Coquette, and those who gazed upon it never forgot it.

"Are you the captain, sir?" asked Shannon Vere, raising his cap.

"I am, sir, and I owe you life and fortune."

"May I ask who you are, sir?"

"A lieutenant, sir, on the American armed yacht Sea Shell, and wholly at your service, sir."

"An American vessel! then thank Heaven for that."

"You have saved the Packet Brig Coquette, sir, out of Boston, bound to Havana, with a valuable cargo on board and a number of passengers, most of whom are ladies."

"I am Solomon Chase, Sir Captain, and your very humble servant."

"I am glad to meet you, Captain Chase, and my captain will soon be here, for he has gone to capture the pirate brig."

"It strikes me now, sir, that you had a small force, though when you boarded I thought there were hundreds of you, and I fear your captain has undertaken too much."

"He has thirty men, sir."

"Only thirty! why they attacked me with seventy and left a large force behind them."

"My God! I fear for you, captain!"

Shannon Vere turned instantly to the Sea Savages and said something in his best African.

The result was a stampede for the side, and over they went into their second boat.

"I go to his aid, sir, so please guard those wounded."

As he spoke Shannon Vere leaped over the side, and the boat darted away in the darkness, just as a fierce fire was heard in the direction of the buccaneer brig.

"My heavens! those blacks are the devil!

"I verily believe the craft is an African slaver; but if he's a Dutch pirate I don't care so long as he has saved us."

"Hark! there is severe work yonder, and I'll take half a dozen men in the gig and lend a hand, while you take charge of the brig, Mr. Lowndes, and kill those pirates if they move."

With this the gallant old seaman called half a dozen of his men about him, and rowed rapidly away toward the buccaneer, on board of which a fierce fight was now raging.

Left in command, Mr. Lowndes set his men to work to first look after the brig's wounded.

One of the passengers fortunately was a surgeon of the navy, going to join his vessel, and he at once went to work with a will.

Some half-dozen of the brig's crew and one passenger were dead, and another passenger and nearly a score of men were slightly wounded.

The surgeon soon had the dead taken forward, the wounded looked to and then turned to the pirates.

There were over a score of wounded on the deck, many seriously, and half a dozen dead.

One of Bestor's crew was also dead, and another crouched down by a gun, bleeding from a severe wound but uttering no moan.

"Surgeon Ruse, look to this poor fellow," said Mr. Lowndes, and the African looked grateful as the surgeon attended to him.

"Painful, but not fatal," he said laconically.

Standing on the quarter-deck, the lady passengers had observed all that had passed; but their attention was also directed to the buccaneer brig, on which the fighting still raged.

It certainly was a desperate conflict; but that the fighting was still kept up was some proof that the pirates had met their match.

In vain did Mr. Lowndes try to learn from the wounded African something of his vessel's commander and purpose.

The black was as silent as a statue.

At last the brig was in shipshape condition as far as Mr. Lowndes could have it so, incumbered as it was with dead, wounded and prisoners.

Then all attention was turned toward the buccaneer brig, a guard having been placed over the wounded pirates.

The fighting still was being waged with fierceness, and Mr. Lowndes grew anxious as to the result.

If the blacks were beaten off, the pirates, as victors, and driven mad by the resistance they had met, would doubtless murder all on board the Coquette.

But what was he to do?

He had not a dozen men unhurt, and there was not a breath of air to fill a sail.

The brig coul'd not therefore escape, and so those on board must abide the alternative.

But he determined to still resist to the last, and so had the cannon reloaded, the muskets and small-arms gotten ready and all prepared to beat off another attack, or die in the attempt.

But suddenly the firing on board the buccaneer brig ceased, and then came a deep silence resting upon all.

What it meant no one could tell on the Coquette.

It might mean safety to them—perhaps it meant death.

CHAPTER LII.

AFTER THE COMBAT.

THE silence on board the buccaneer brig was becoming painful, to those on board the Coquette, who knew not, nor could guess, what it portended to them.

Mr. Lowndes called his men to their posts, and a bright watch was kept for the coming of a boat, be it with friend or foe.

At last the sound of oars was heard, and as a boat appeared in the gloom, Mr. Lowndes hailed:

"Ho that boat!"

"Ay, ay, Coquette! it is Chase!"

"And the pirate?"

"Belongs to the gallant man who saved us!"

A wild cheer broke from those on the brig and feminine voices mingled with those of the men.

The cheer was answered from the boat, and then, off across the waters, came the wild, weird, appalling yell of the Sea Savages, and in an instant the Coquette sent forth a cry of the same kind that fairly startled those who heard it and momentarily silenced the groans of the wounded.

A moment more and Captain Chase sprung upon deck, followed by his men.

"We got in at the latter end and helped a little, I hope, but they had the fight won: but had not that handsome lieutenant gone with his black demons, I don't know just how it would have ended!" announced Captain Chase.

"And the pirates?"

"Well, they had over a hundred men on their brig, and a wild lot, too; but if they count noses now, I'm thinking they'll fall short of that number some three-score, and most of those living are wounded."

"I tell you, friends, those sable Satans don't do things half way."

"And, oh, Lord! how their captain can fight—yes, and his lieutenant, too! Why, their swords are dripping with the red work they did."

"And were neither of them killed?" asked Miriam.

"Not they! for they've got a contract not to be killed, I guess, Miss Miriam; but they are scratched up a little, or they are not human to be where they were."

"And who is this gallant man, Captain Chase?" asked Miriam.

"Lord only knows, miss."

"Or his vessel; do you know nothing about him?"

"Only, Miss Miriam, that he told me to return to his brig and he would soon row down to me with the pirate, and his vessel was in a good harborage, where we could go until morning and repair damages."

"There comes the brig now!" cried Miriam, who had a glass at her eye.

"Yes, he has his boats out ahead, and is towing in-shore. I'll get the anchor up and a boat out to follow him to an anchorage."

Nearer and nearer came the brig, until, in a clear, commanding voice, there floated over the waters:

"Ho, the Coquette aboy!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Get your boat out ahead and tow in after me."

"All ready, sir, and I'm coming."

"Where have I heard that voice before? How strange that it should impress me! Oh, Heaven! now I know all! The African crew! the Sea Savages! It is the vessel of Frank Bestor! the very vessel he came in to save my brother from the gallows!"

"But what is he? what is his vessel?" and Miriam covered her face with her hands and leaned over the taffrail to hide her emotion.

For a long while she remained thus, and, as she did so, she mused to herself in a bitter mood:

"Why do I believe what has been said of him? Why do I think that he, as many have said, made his fortune by piracy?"

"No, no, it cannot be, for Frank Bestor could not fall so low. No, no, he is good, he is true! And yet, why does he cruise the seas with this crew of black madmen?"

"Alas! I know not, I cannot tell!"

"But, be he whom he may, or what he may, he has saved us this night from death. He has fought like a hero, and we owe him life and all."

"Ah me! How is all this to end?"

The brig had now followed the buccaneer in under the shadow of the land, where the latter soon dropped anchor in what appeared to be a land-locked basin.

A few moments more and there came the command:

"Let go your anchor where you are, sir!"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Captain Chase, and he added, to Mr. Lowndes:

"That fellow has a quarter-deck ring to his orders, and no mistake."

"Yonder is a schooner at anchor further in-shore," announced Miriam, who was sweeping the basin with her glass.

"Yes, I see her now, and she is the cruiser, or whatever he calls his craft—

"Ah! there comes a boat from the buccaneer brig!"

Miriam turned her face away as a boat came alongside and an officer sprung on the deck of the brig.

It was Shannon Vere, and, advancing to where the little group stood on the quarter-deck he said, politely, as he raised his cap, seeing ladies present.

"Captain Bestor begs, sir, that you will send your dead and wounded on board the prize, as the former will be buried from her and the latter be carried into port where they can be looked to."

"He urges this, sir, as you have lady passengers on board."

"Your captain is very kind, sir, and I will accept his offer, except in cases where my own men are slightly wounded and we can look after them."

"I will attend to it at once, for my decks are not a pleasant sight for ladies' eyes, and I am very glad that it is night to hide its horrors."

"War is not an agreeable sight, sir, even to a man," was the reply, and Shannon Vere was turning away when Mr. Lowndes asked:

"Will you please tell us something, sir, of your coming to our rescue?"

"We are on a cruise, sir, and put in here to fill our water casks. Hearing the firing we went to aid you in our boats, it being dead calm, for we suspected you of being a merchantman attacked by pirates."

"You know that we left to attack the buccaneer, and Captain Bestor carried it, though the fight was a desperate one, for the pirates numbered considerably over a hundred."

"But are much under it now?"

"Oh, yes, for they suffered badly on your vessel, some were drowned jumping overboard, and many were on the brig, which is the craft of Carlos the Cuban pirate. So we have made a valuable capture."

"You have, indeed, sir; but may I ask, how it is that you have a wild African crew for your vessel?"

"A fancy of Captain Bestor's sir, for he got them from a slaver I believe, and trained them, and they are devils to fight, while no better seamen can be found."

"I believe you, sir; but may we not expect Captain Bestor and yourself to breakfast with us, sir?"

"Yes, I warmly second the invitation," added Captain Chase, just then returning to the group.

"Yes, you will have an opportunity of meeting the ladies you have saved by your valor," continued Mr. Lowndes.

"I think I may accept, sir, for Captain Bestor and myself," was the reply, and turning, Shannon Vere returned to his boat and took the flotilla of wounded and dead in tow.

Then all the passengers retired to the cabin, the crew set to work cleaning decks, and when Miriam Vance, soon after sunrise, came on deck, the brig showed little trace of the fierce fight of the night before, other than the bullet-scarred bulwarks.

CHAPTER LIII.

FATE'S DECREE.

FRANK BESTOR had not weighed odds, in his going to the rescue of the brig, nor had he in pursuing the pirates on board their own vessel.

He boarded her with the flying pirates, and his Sea Savages were at his back.

He saw that he was vastly outnumbered, but he rushed to the attack.

Fortunately, when it seemed as if he and his men must be bodily swept from the decks, Shannon Vere boarded with his force, and the tide was turned.

With Shannon Vere's aid he pushed the pirates to the bitter end, and, as Captain Chase arrived with his boat's crew, many of the buccaneers sprung overboard, while others cried lustily for mercy.

This ended the combat, and as the pirate chief had been disarmed by Frank Bestor, and made a prisoner, the brig was a prize to the Sea Shell's commander.

The pirate chief had been taken into the cabin, and when the brig dropped anchor in the mouth of the lagoon, he bailed the deck, and asked to see Captain Bestor.

"Well, sir!" and Frank Bestor entered the cabin.

"I am in irons, so send your blacks out, as I wish to talk to you."

"Say what you would, for the blacks do not understand."

"Better send them out."

Bestor was a man without fear, so he did so; then the pirate chief asked:

"Don't you know me, Captain Bestor?"

"I have seen your face before."

"Yes, but where?"

"I cannot recall, and yet—"

"Africa!"

"Hail! you were the lieutenant of Pierre!"

"I was, and my name is Carlos."

"I recall you now, for I saw you when I visited your captain."

"Yes, and Mendez, whom you caught eavesdropping, the captain executed."

"It was like him."

"He has done worse than that."

"What do you mean?"

"Look here, Captain Bestor, you have captured Carlos, the Pirate, and that is a great thing, especially as you did it with a small force."

"You see, I know a secret you wish to know, and if you put Carlos down as one of the slain, consider me one of the men, and promise to let me go, along with the contents of a box I have hidden here in the cabin, I will tell you what I mean."

"Your neck to the hangman is worth more than your secret."

"You think so?"

"I do."

"Well, let me ask if you do not wish to know something about a certain youth who sailed for England, and—"

"Hail! what know you of him?"

"All you wish to know."

"Is he alive?"

"I'll answer yes, or he was, ten days ago; but I'll not answer another word until I get your pledge to report Carlos dead, and let me escape with my gold."

"If I do?"

"I'll pilot you to find the youth, and tell you my secret."

"I'll report you slain, for it is believed by your men you are mortally wounded, and I'll set you free the moment you pilot me to find the youth you speak of; and I'll let you have one thousand dollars in gold out of your booty. This is all I will do, Carlos."

"Well, I'll accept your offer," and the cunning sea scourge smiled to himself as he thought of a belt of gold he then had around his waist.

"Now, what have you to say?"

"The youth's name is Gordon Grayhurst?"

"Yes."

"He sailed for England in a new brig out of New Orleans?"

"He did."

"Going to look up some estates there?"

"Yes."

"Well, the brig was overhauled by Pierre the Pirate, on its way out, and the whole lot put to death except the youth and half a dozen others."

"This is the brig, you know, and Pierre ran to the Bahamas, anchored one night the brig a league from his vessel, pretended to take the prisoners from the schooner to the brig, but put the youth and his old negro ashore in irons, to die on a barren island."

"The balance he let go down in his boat, pretending they attacked him when near the brig, which I had command of, and I picked him and two blacks up."

"Pierre went to Cuba and sold his slaves and the brig, and I was given command of the craft by her purchaser, so turned her into a free sea rover."

"One of the blacks with Pierre that night in the boat, went with me, and he spoke English a little, and told me that Pierre had pretended all went down in the boat, when two had been put on the island."

"I sailed for the island ten days ago, and saw two men signaling me; but they suddenly disappeared as though they had recognized the brig, while I saw a sail and went in chase."

"I caught her, and you caught me before I could return to the island."

"Now I go free?"

"Yes, and if I find Gordon Grayhurst alive there, I will give you two thousand in gold," was the ready reply of Frank Bestor, who had listened with horror, mingled with joy, at what he had heard of Don Moro's treachery and Gordon's escape from the death intended for him.

"I sail for the island to-morrow, and you shall be landed at the first port I touch, a free man," and Frank Bestor went on deck.

When the morning dawned the brig had all the wounded on board, the dead had been sewed up in hammocks, weighted with shot and thrown overboard, and the schooner and the buccaneer craft looked as trim as did the Coquette.

Shannon Vere gave the invitation to Bestor, and, as he wished to see the brig's commander, he went on board with his lieutenant, to accept.

Captain Chase met them on deck, and walked toward Miriam, who stood alone, leaning over the taffrail.

"Mrs. Vance, permit me to present your brave rescuers, Captain Bestor and Lieutenant Vere."

Miriam turned and her eyes met those of her lover.

"Miriam! my God! can this be you?"

"Yes, Frank, and glad to acknowledge the debt of more than gratitude I owe you. Let the dead past be forgotten from this moment!"

Thus they met again, and that was a pleasant breakfast that morning on the brig, and when the Coquette sailed on her way, Frank Bestor had the pledge of Mr. and Mrs. Lowndes that they would return from Havana via New Orleans and let him meet them there, and that this promise of theirs included Miriam the reader may infer from the parting words of the young sailor:

"Miriam, it was a cruel fate that divided us, a joyous destiny that has brought us together. You have said, let the dead past be forgotten, and I so fervently say amen! that I ask you to become my wife when you arrive in New Orleans. What do you answer me, Miriam?"

"If I do wrong, God forgive me, and you; but I answer that I will be your wife."

CHAPTER LIV.

LEFT TO DIE.

FRANK BESTOR watched the Coquette sail away, and his face wore a look of joy that at last he had won the woman he loved.

He felt no anxiety as to the brig's reaching Havana all right, and determined to at once get ready to sail for the island on which Pierre the Pirate had left Gordon Grayhurst and his faithful negro servant.

The chief, supposed to be mortally wounded, was conveyed on board the schooner, and all the rest of the wounded, from the Coquette, the pirates and the Sea Shell were left on board the prize, of which Shannon Vere was placed in command.

Then the two vessels set sail, and on the third day came in sight of the island.

They ran in to an anchorage, which Bestor knew, having been there when with Pierre the Pirate long before, and landing with several of his Sea Savages he began a search of the island.

After a short walk they came to a ravine, and there sat two men, wholly unconscious of the coming of the two vessels.

They were in front of a small cabin built of wreckage, and were cooking their midday meal.

"Ho, Gordon Grayhurst, ahoy!"

At the voice the two men sprung to their feet.

One was Gordon Grayhurst, the other the faithful negro, Trust.

Their clothes were in tatters, their looks indicated a rough life, no shoes were upon their feet, and few would have recognized the handsome youth, Gordon Grayhurst, in the one who came running toward Frank Bestor.

The meeting was a touching one, and rapidly the youth told his story.

Pierre had left them there loaded with irons, to die.

But, when the morning came they had found a small schooner wrecked upon the other shore.

There was not a soul on board, for at low tide they went out to it; but there were provisions in plenty, though somewhat damaged, and a tool-chest, and the latter furnished the implements for freeing them of their irons, which was accomplished after long weary days.

They had then built a cabin of the wreckage, had found a spring, removed the provisions ashore and thus lived.

Their provisions were about gone, and but for the coming of the Sea Shell they must soon have died of starvation.

Such was the story of Gordon Grayhurst, and then the two deserted victims of Don Moro were taken on board the schooner, and the two vessels set sail for home.

During the voyage Gordon Grayhurst improved greatly, as did also Trust, and Frank Bestor was glad to feel that the youth would not appear to his mother and Estelle as he had to him when he saw him on the island.

It was night when the two vessels anchored in the cove at Hope Haven, and Carlos was smuggled ashore in the boat with Gordon and Bestor, for he was supposed to have died at sea.

The pirate was given a room in the mansion, and told that the next morning he should be sent by carriage to town where he could catch a craft for some Gulf seaport, and having given his orders to his servants, and paid the money promised to the pirate, Frank Bestor said:

"I advise you now, Carlos, to lead a different life, or the gallows will be your end."

"I have had all I want of outlawry, Captain Bestor, and will follow your advice. Good-by and thank you."

Thus they parted never to meet again.

When the sun arose the next morning the servants at Belle Eden quickly assured their masters with cries that the Sea Shell had returned and a strange vessel with her.

In hope and despair commingled, mother and daughter hastily made their toilets, and, as they went out upon the piazza, saw a boat coming ashore with three persons in the stern-sheets.

"Oh, mother! there is brother Gordon! Captain Bestor, too, and—and—yes, it is Mr. Vere!" cried Estelle.

Soon after the three reached the house and the meeting between the returned youth and his mother and sister was most affecting.

"Mother," and Gordon turned to Frank Bestor:

"I owe my life to this gentleman, and to this one too. I was taken by a pirate, left on a desert island to die, in irons, with Trust my only companion, and these gentlemen saved me."

"The pirate, I must tell you, is one whom we once knew as Monsieur Belgarde, of Castle Moro, and afterward as Pierre the Pirate."

"Later he has figured in disguise as Don Moro, and last night we landed at his home, captured his yacht and made him prisoner, and Captain Bestor hanged him to the yard-arm of the brig yonder, which is the craft I sailed in for England."

"I know that this will shock you, mother; but, you must know the truth, and more than I have told you, for you must know that Don Moro, the Pirate, was none other than father's youngest brother, Piermont Grayhurst, who ran off to sea as a boy, who captured you and tried to make you marry him when you were an actress, and thus, from a desire to get the title and estates, sought my death."

"And more, he it was who urged on the quarrel that ended my father's life, and all this I know through Shannon Vere, who, while the supposed Don was away on his African cruise, discovered all from certain papers the man strangely kept in his home."

"This secret of Don Moro, mother, must rest with us here present, and Mr. Vere will give out that he has departed, ordering his property sold."

"That coming from the sale will be sent by Captain Bestor to the Government, and his yacht will be turned over as a prize and taken North with the brig."

"Now, dear mother, you know the truth, you and Estelle, and we owe all to Frank Bestor and Shannon Vere."

CHAPTER LV.

CONCLUSION.

THE Sea Shell sailed northward with two prizes, and the Shark was one of them, under command of Gordon Grayhurst, the buccaneer being another, under command of Shannon Vere.

Captain Frank Bestor arrived in port in safety with his prizes, and made his report to the proper authorities, reporting the hanging of Pierre, the Pirate, and the death of Carlos, the Corsair, with a number of the latter's crew to surrender as prisoners.

Then the Sea Shell set sail southward, and Gordon Grayhurst and Shannon Vere were the guests of Frank Bestor.

Her destination was New Orleans, and arriving there Frank Bestor found that the Lowndes' and Miriam had arrived the week before.

At the fashionable hotel, where the visitors were stopping, there was a private wedding, the contracting parties being Frank Bestor and Mrs. Miriam Vance.

Then the Sea Shell again set sail and her destination was Hope Haven, the home of the gallant sailor, and the welcome that the beautiful bride received was enough to make glad any heart.

Soon after the wedding the Sea Shell set sail once more.

She had a double duty to perform.

One was to carry Gordon Grayhurst to England, and the next was to go to the coast of Africa and get the wives and children of the Sea Savages, as Frank Bestor had promised.

She did both duties successfully.

Castle Moro was not sold, but left to go to ruin, and its ruins were to be seen until a few years ago.

Gordon Grayhurst claimed certain amounts of his English fortune, but the estates and title he gave up in favor of a cousin, preferring to be an American; but he fell in love with a sweet little maid over there, and some years after went over and brought her back as his wife, which made his mother's heart glad, as she had feared her son would be tempted to go to sea again.

Though she had many offers of marriage, Mrs. Grayhurst refused them all, for she had known but one love, and that was for Gaston Grayhurst, and she would not desecrate it by becoming a second time a wife.

In his elegant home of Hope Haven Frank Bestor lived with his beautiful bride, and even from their children was kept the dread secret that their father had slain in a duel the first husband of their mother—in truth, no one knew that she had ever been married before, so close was the secret kept.

And Shannon Vere?

He too held a secret in his heart, and a black one of his early life.

But he had reformed utterly, and he dwelt in his handsome home like a hermit, for he had learned to love Estelle Grayhurst, and he knew that between them there was a grave over which their hands must never be clasped in wedlock.

And Estelle, growing up to be as beautiful as a dream, she knew that Shannon Vere loved her—that she loved him—and she too bore her sorrow in secret and never married.

In the little churchyard on the bay shore rest those who figured in this romance, and there may their ashes ever rest in peace.

THE END.

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Mrs. Jonas Jones. For three gents and two ladies.
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Benedict and Bachelor. For two boys.
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The Surprise Party. For six little girls.
A Practical Demonstration. For three boys.
Refinement. Acting charade. Several characters.
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The Sick Well Man. For three boys.
The Investigating Committee. For nine ladies.
A "Corner" in Rogues. For four boys.
The Imps of the Trunk Room. For five girls.
The Boasters. A Colloquy. For two little girls.
Kitty's Funeral. For several little girls.
Stratagem. Charade. For several characters.
Testing Her Scholars. For numerous scholars.
The World is What We Make It. For two girls.
The Old and the New. For gentleman and lady.

Dime Dialogues, No. 17.

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What Parts Friends. For two little girls.
Martha Washington Tea Party. For five little girls in old-time costume.
The Evil There is in it. For two young boys.
Wise and Foolish Little Girl. For two girls.
A Child's Inquiries. For small child and teacher.
The Cooking Club. For two girls and others.
How to do it. For two boys.
A Hundred Years to Come. For boy and girl.
Don't Trust Faces. For several small boys.
Above the Skies. For two small girls.
The True Heroism. For three little boys.
Give Us Little Boys a Chance; The Story of the Plum Pudding; I'll Be a Man; A Little Girl's Rights Speech; Johnny's Opinions of Grandmother; The Boasting Hen; He Knows der Rest; A Small Boy's View of Corns; Robby's Sermon; Nobody's Child: Nutting at Grandpa Gray's; Little Boy's View of How Columbus Discovered America; Little Girl's View; Little Boy's Speech on Time; A Little Boy's Pocket; The Midnight Murder; Robby Rob's Second Sermon; How the Baby Came; A Boy's Observations; The New Slave; A Mother's Love; The Crewwin' Glory; Baby Lulu; Josh Billings on the Bumble-bee, Wren, Alligator; Died Yesterday; The Chicken's Mistake; The Heir Apparent; Deliver Us from Evil; Don't Want to be Good; Only a Drunken Fellow; The Two Little Robins; Be Slow to Condemn; A Nonsense Tale; Little Boy's Declaration; A Child's Desire; Bogus; The Goblin Cat; Rub-a-dub; Calumny; Little Chatterbox; Where are They? A Boy's View; The Twenty Frogs; Going to School; A Morning Bath; The Girl of Dun-dee; A Fancy; In the Sunlight; The New-laid Egg; The Little Musician; Idle Ben; Pottery-man.

The Dime Dialogues.

Dime Dialogues, No. 18.

Fairy Wishes. Several characters, male and female. No Rose Without a Thorn. Two males, one female. Too Greedy by Half. For three males. One Good Turn Deserves Another. For six ladies. Courting Melinda. For three boys and one lady. The New Scholar. For several boys. The Little Intercessor. For four ladies. Antecedents. For three gentlemen and three ladies. Give a Dog a Bad Name. For four gentlemen. Spring-Time Wishes. For six little girls. Lost Charlie; or, the Gipsy's Revenge. For numerous characters. A little Tramp. For three little boys. Hard Times. For two gentlemen and four ladies. The Lesson Well Worth Learning. For two males and two females.

Dime Dialogues, No. 19.

An Awful Mystery. For two females and two males. Contentment. For five little boys. Who are the Saints? For three young girls. California Uncle. For 3 males and 3 females. Be Kind to the Poor. A little folks' play. How People are Insured. A "duet." Mayor. Acting Charade. For four characters. The Smoke Fiend. For four boys. A Kindergarten Dialogue. For a Christmas Festival. Personated by seven characters. The Use of Study. For three girls. The Refined Simpletons. For four ladies. Remember Benson. For three males. Modern Education. Three males and one female. Mad With Too Much Lore. For three males. The Fairy's Warning. Dress Piece. For two girls. Aunt Eunice's Experiment. For several. The Mysterious G. G. For 2 females and 1 male. We'll Mortgage the Farm. For 1 male and 2 females. An Old-Fashioned Duet. The Auction. For numerous characters.

Dime Dialogues, No. 20.

The Wrong Man. For three males and three females. Afternoon Calls. For two little girls. Ned's Present. For four boys. Judge Not. For teacher and several scholars. Telling Dreams. For four little folks. Saved by Love. For two boys. Mistaken Identity. For two males and three females. Couldn't Read English. For three males, one female. A Little Vesuvius. For six little girls. "Sold." For three boys. An Air Castle. For five males and three females. City Manners and Country Hearts. 3 girls and 1 boy. The Silly Dispute. For two girls and teacher. Not One There! For four male characters. Foot-print. For numerous characters. Keeping Boarders. For two females and three males. A Cure for Good. For one lady and two gentlemen. The Credulous Wise-Acre. For two males.

Dime Dialogues, No. 21.

A Successful Donation Party. For several. Out of Debt Out of Danger. For three males and three females. Little Red Riding Hood. For two children. How She Made Him Propose. A duet. The House on the Hill. For four females. Evidence enough. For two males. Worth and Wealth. For four females. Waterfall. For several. Mark Hastings' Return. For four males. Cinderella. For several children. Too Much for Aunt Matilda. For three females. Wit against Wile. For three females and one male. A Sudden Recovery. For three males. The Double Stratagem. For four females. Counting Chickens Before They were Hatched. For four males.

Dime Dialogues, No. 22.

The Dark Cupid. For 3 Gentlemen and 2 ladies. That Never-do-Well. Two males and two females. High Art. For two girls. Strange Adventures. For two boys. The King's Supper. For four girls. A Practical Exemplification. For two boys. Titania's Banquet. For a number of girls. Monsieur Thiers in America. For four boys. Doxy's Diplomacy. For three females, etc. A Frenchman. For two ladies and one gentleman. Boys Will Be Boys. For two boys and one girl. A Rainy Day. For three young ladies. God Is Love. For a number of scholars. The Way He Managed. For two males, two females. Fandango. For various characters. The Little Doctor. For two tiny girls. A Sweet Revenge. For four boys. A May Day. For three little girls. From The Sublime to The Ridiculous. For 14 males. Heart Not Face. For five boys.

Dime Dialogues, No. 23.

Rhoda Hunt's Remedy. For three females, one male. Hans Schmidt's Recommend. For two males. Cheery and Grumble. For two little boys. The Phantom Doughnuts. For six females. Does it Pay? For six males. Company Manners and Home Impoliteness. For two males, two females and two children. The Glad Days. For two little boys. Unfortunate Mr. Brown. For one male, six females. The Real cost. For two girls. A Bear Garden. For three males and two females. The Busy Bees. For four little girls. Checkmate. For numerous characters. School-Time. For two little girls. Death Scene. Two principal characters and adjuncts. Dross and Gold. Several characters, male and female. Confound Miller. For three males and two females. Ignorance vs. Justice. For eleven males. Pedants All. For four males.

Dime Dialogues, No. 24.

The Goddess of Liberty. For nine young ladies. The Three Graces. For three little girls. The Music Director. For seven males. A Strange Secret. For three girls. An Unjust Man. For four males.

The Shop Girl's Victory. For 1 male and 3 females. The Psychometriser. For 2 gentlemen and 2 ladies. Mean Is No Word For It. For four ladies. Whimsical. A number of characters of both sexes. Blessed Are the Peace-makers. Seven young girls. The Six Brave Men. For six boys. Have You Heard the News? A gossip's catastrophe. The True Queen. A colloquy in verse. 2 young girls. A Slight Mistake. For 4 males, 1 female, etc. Lazy and Busy. A dialogue in rhyme. 10 little fellows. The Old and the Young. 1 gentleman and 1 little girl. That Postal Card. For 3 ladies and 1 gentleman. Mother Goose and Her Household. A whole school fancy dress dialogue and travestie.

Dime Dialogues, No. 25.

The Societies of the Delectables and Les Miserables. For two ladies and two gentlemen. What Each Would Have. For six little boys and teacher. Sunshine Through the Clouds. For four ladies. The Friend in Need. For four males. The Hours. For twelve little girls. In Doors and Out. For five little boys. Dingbats. For one female and three males. The Pound of Flesh. For three boys. Beware of the Peddlers. For seven mixed characters. Good Words. For a number of boys. A Friend. For a number of little girls. The True Use of Wealth. For a whole school. Gamester. For numerous characters. Put Yourself In His Place. For two boys. Little Wise Heads. For four little girls. The Regenerators. For five boys. Crabtree's Wooing. For several characters. Integrity the Basis of All Success. For two males. A Crooked Way Made Straight. Gentleman and lady. How to "Break In" Young Hearts. For two ladies and one gentleman.

Dime Dialogues, No. 26.

Poor Cousins. For three ladies and two gentlemen. Mountains and Mole-hills. For 6 ladies and spectators. A Test That Did Not Fail. For six boys. Two Ways of Seeing Things. For two little girls. Don't Count Your Chickens Before They Are Hatched. For four ladies and a boy. All is Fair in Love and War. 8 ladies & 2 gentlemen. How Uncle Josh Got Rid of the Legacy. For two males, with several transformations. The Lesson of Mercy. For two very small girls. Practice What You Preach. For four ladies. Politician. For numerous characters. The Canvassing Agent. For 2 males and 2 females. Grub. For two males. A Slight Scare. For 3 females and 1 male. Embodied Sunshine. For three young ladies. How Jim Peters Died. For two males.

Dime Dialogues, No. 27.

Patsey O'Dowd's Campaign. 3 males and 1 female. Hasty Inferences Not Always Just. Numerous boys. Discontented Annie. For several girls. A Double Surprise. For four males and one female. What Was It? For five ladies. What Will Cure Them. For a lady and two boys. Independent. For numerous characters. Each Season the Best. For four boys. Tried and Found Wanting. For several males. The Street Girl's Good Angel. 2 ladies & 2 little girls. A Boy's Plot. For several characters. "That Ungrateful Little Nigger." For two males. If I Had the Money. For three little girls. Appearances Are Deceitful. Several ladies & 1 gent. Love's Protest. For two little girls. An Enforced Cure. For several characters. Those Who Preach and those Who Perform. 3 males. A Gentle Conquest. For two young girls.

Dime Dialogues, No. 28.

A Test that Told. For six ladies and two gents. Organizing a Debating Society. For four boys. The Awakening. For four little girls. The Rebuke Proper. For 3 gentlemen and 2 ladies. Exorcising an Evil Spirit. For six ladies. Both Sides of the Fence. For four males. The Spirits of the Wood. For two troupes of girls. No Room for the Drone. For three little boys. Arm-chair. For numerous characters. Measure for Measure. For four girls. Saved by a Dream. For two males and two females. An Infallible Sign. For four boys. A good Use for money. For six little girls. An Agreeable Profession. For several characters.

Dime Dialogues, No. 29.

Who Shall Have the Dictionary? For six males and two females. The Test of Bravery. For four boys and teacher. Fortune's Wheel. For four males. The Little Aesthetes. For six little girls. The Yes and No of Smoke. For three little boys. No References. For six gentlemen and three ladies. An Amazing Good Boy. One male and one female. What a Visitation Did. For several ladies. Simple Simon. For four little boys. The Red Light. For four males, two females, etc. The Sweetest Thought. For four little girls. The Inhuman Monster. For 6 ladies and 1 gentleman. Three Little Fools. For four small boys. Beware of the Dog! For 3 ladies and 3 "Dodgers." Bethlehem. For a Sunday-School Class Exhibition. Joe Hunt's Hunt. For two boys and two girls. Rags. For six males.

Dime Dialogues, No. 30.

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